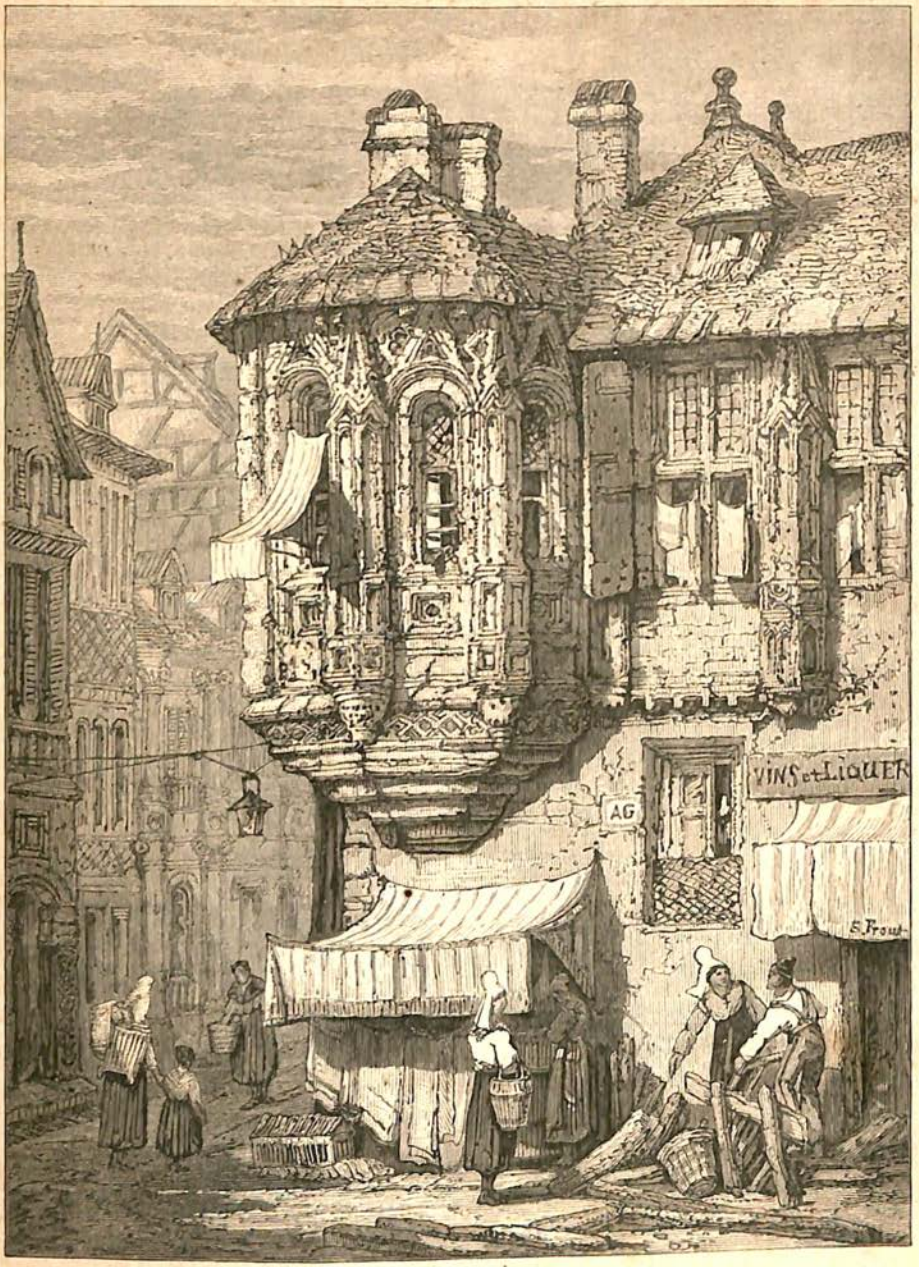
00056873

BOMBAY BRANCH
OF THE
ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY
TOWN HALL, BOMBAY.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 July, 2018

NORMANDY PICTURESQUE.



JOAN OF ARC'S HOUSE AT ROUEN.

By the late S. PROUT, from a Drawing in possession of the Author.

See Chap. IX

• 4200

NORMANDY

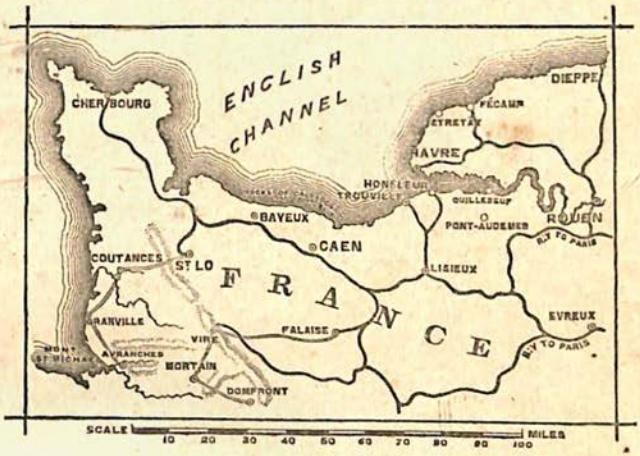
PICTURESQUE.

56873

BY

HENRY BLACKBURN,

AUTHOR OF 'TRAVELLING IN SPAIN,' 'THE PYRENEES,' 'ARTISTS AND ARABS,' ETC.



WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS.

~~QX f~~ 32

QX f 32

LONDON:

SAMPSON LOW, SON, & MARSTON,

CROWN BUILDINGS, FLEET STREET.

1869.

All rights reserved.

London:
Printed by William Clowes and Sons,
Stamford Street & Charing Cross.

CONTENTS.

		PAGE
CHAP.	I.—ON THE WING	1
„	II.—PONT AUDEMER	13
„	III.—LISIEUX	35
„	IV.—CAEN—DIVES	51
„	V.—BAYEUX	83
„	VI.—ST. LO — COUTANCES — GRANVILLE ..	109
„	VII.—AVRANCHES — MONT ST. MICHAEL ..	135
„	VHI.—VIRE—MORTAIN — FALAISE	162
„	IX.—ROUEN	185
„	X.—THE VALLEY OF THE SEINE	217
„	XI.—ARCHITECTURE AND COSTUME	243
„	XII.—THE WATERING PLACES OF NORMANDY	265
	APPENDIX	283

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

JOAN OF ARC'S HOUSE AT ROUEN . . *By* S. PROUT. *Frontispiece.*

CHAP.			PAGE
II.—	Market-place at Pont Audemer (*From a sketch by A. E. Browne.*)	S. P. HALL	14
,,	A Sketch at Pont Audemer	M. TIBIALONG.	18
,,	Old Houses at Pont Audemer	A. E. BROWNE	29
III.—	Wood-carving at Lisieux	A. E. BROWNE	40
IV.—	Church of St. Pierre, Caen	M. CLERGET	54
,,	A Sketch, at Caen	M. TIBIALONG	64
,,	Old Woman of Caen	M. TIRARD	69
V.—	Bayeux Cathedral	H. BLACKBURN	83
,,	Corner of House at Bayeux	A. E. BROWNE.	86
,,	Ancient Tablet in Cathedral	H. BLACKBURN	90
,,	Fac-simile of Bayeux Tapestry	A. SEVERN	103
VI.—	A Sketch, at Cherbourg.	M. TIBIALONG	110
,,	Exterior Pulpit at St. Lo	*From a Photograph.*	116
,,	A 'Toiler of the Sea'	S. P. HALL	132
,,	Mont St. Michael	H. BLACKBURN	135
VII.—	Church near Avranches	H. BLACKBURN	144
,,	Ancient Cross	H. BLACKBURN	147
VIII.—	Clock Tower at Vire	H. BLACKBURN	171
IX.—	Rouen Cathedral	M. CLERGET	194
X.—	Market-women—Lower Normandy (*From a sketch by A. E. Browne.*)	S. P. HALL	217
XI.—	Modern houses at Houlgate	H. BLACKBURN	253
,,	'The Wrestlers'	GUSTAVE DORÉ	257

NORMANDY

PICTURESQUE.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE WING.

IT is, perhaps, rather a subject for reproach to English people that the swallows and butterflies of our social system are too apt to forsake their native woods and glens in the summer months, and to fly to 'the Continent' for recreation and change of

scene; whilst poets tell us, with eloquent truth, that there is a music in the branches of England's trees, and a soft beauty in her landscape more soothing and gracious in their influence than 'aught in the world beside.'

Whether it be wise or prudent, or even pleasant, to leave our island in the very height of its season, so to speak—at a time when it is most lovely, when the sweet fresh green of the meadows is changing to bloom of harvest and gold of autumn—for countries the features of which are harder, and the landscape, if bolder, certainly less beautiful, for a climate which, if more sunny, is certainly more bare and burnt up, and for skies which, if more blue, lack much of the poetry of cloud-land—we will not stay to enquire; but admitting the fact that, for various reasons, English people *will* go abroad in the autumn, and that there is a fashion, we might almost say a passion, for 'flying, flying south,' which seems irresistible—we will endeavour in

the following pages to suggest a compromise, in the shape of a tour which shall include the undoubted delight and charm of foreign travel, with scenery more like England than any other in Europe, which shall be within an easy distance from our shores, and within the limits of a short purse; and which should have one special attraction for us, viz., that the country to be seen and the people to be visited bear about them a certain English charm—the men a manliness, and the women a beauty with which we may be proud to claim kindred.

We speak of the north-west corner of France, divided from us (and perhaps once not divided) by the British Channel—the district called NORMANDY (*Neustria*), and sometimes, 'nautical France,' which includes the Departments of *Calvados*, *Eure*, *Orne*, and part of *La Manche*. It comprises, as is well known, but a small part of France, and occupies an area of about one hundred and fifty miles by seventy-five, but in

this small compass is comprehended so much that is interesting to English people that we shall find quite enough to see and to do within its limits alone.

If the reader will turn to the little map on our title-page, he will see at a glance the position of the principal towns in Normandy, which we may take in the following order, making England (or London) our starting point:—

Crossing the Channel from Southampton to Havre by night, or from Newhaven to Dieppe by day, we proceed at once to the town of PONT AUDEMER, situated about six miles from Quillebeuf and eight from Honfleur, both on the left bank of the Seine. From Havre, Pont Audemer may be reached in a few hours, by water, and from Dieppe, Rouen or Paris there is now railway communication. From Pont Audemer we go to LISIEUX (by road or railway), from Lisieux to CAEN, BAYEUX and ST. LO, where the railway ends, and we take the diligence

to COUTANCES, GRANVILLE, and AVRANCHES. After a visit to the island of Mont St. Michael, we may return (by diligence) by way of MORTAIN, VIRE, and FALAISE; thence to ROUEN, and by the valley of the Seine, to the sea-coast.[1]

The whole journey is a short and inexpensive one, and may occupy a fortnight, a month, or three months (the latter is not too long), and may be made a simple *voyage de plaisir*, or turned to good account for artistic study.

But there is one peculiarity about it that should be mentioned at the outset. The route we have indicated, simple as it seems, and most easily to be carried out as it would appear, is really rather difficult of accomplishment, for the one reason that the journey is almost always

[1] We have not put CHERBOURG, DOMFRONT, or EVREUX, as a matter of course, on our list, although they should be included in a tour, especially the two latter towns, for their archæological interest.

made on *cross-roads*. The traveller who follows it will continually find himself delayed because he is not going to Paris. 'Paris is France' under the Imperial régime, and at nearly every town or railway station he will be reminded of the fact; and, if he be not careful, will find himself and his baggage whisked off to the capital.[1] If he wishes to see Normandy, and to carry out the idea of a provincial tour in its integrity, he must resist temptation, *have nothing to do with Paris*, and put up with slow trains, creeping diligences, and second-rate inns.

The network of roads and railways in France

[1] The same remark applies to Mantes, familiar to us from its historical associations, and by its graceful towers, which so many have seen from the railway in going to Paris. "All the world goes by Mantes, but very few stop there," writes a traveller. "The tourist, on his way to Paris, generally has a ticket which allows him to stop at Rouen but not at Mantes. People very anxious to stop at Mantes, and to muse, so to speak, amongst its embers, have had great searchings of heart how to get there, and have not accomplished their object until after some years of reflection."

converge as surely to the capital as the threads of a spider's web lead to its centre, and in pursuing his route through the bye-ways of Normandy the traveller will be much in the position of the fly that has stepped upon its meshes—every road and railway leading to the capital where '*M. d'Araignée*' the enticing, the alluring, the fascinating, the most extravagant—is ever waiting for his prey.

From the moment he sets foot on the shores of Normandy, Paris will be made ever present to him. Let him go, for example, to the railway station at any port on his arrival in France, and he will find everything — people, goods, and provisions, being hurried off to the capital as if there were no other place to live in, or to provide for. Let him (in pursuit of the journey we have suggested) tread cautiously on the *fil de fer* at Lisieux, for he will pass over one of the main lines that connect the world of Fashion at Paris with another world of Fashion

by the sea.[1] Let him, when at St. Lo, apply for a place in the diligence for Avranches, and he will be told by a polite official that nothing can be done until the mail train arrives from Paris; and let him not be surprised if, on his arrival at Avranches, his name be chronicled in the local papers as the latest arrival from the capital. Let him again, on his homeward journey, try and persuade the people of Mortain and Vire that he does *not* intend to visit Paris, and he will be able to form some estimate of its importance in the eyes of the French people.

We draw attention to this so pointedly at the outset, because it is altogether inconsistent and wide of our purpose in making a quiet, and we may add, economical, visit to Normandy, to do, as is the general custom with travellers—spend half their time and most of their money in Paris.

[1] Trouville and Deauville-sur-mer.

Thus much in outline for the ordinary English traveller on a holiday ramble; but the artist or the architect need not go so far a-field. If we might make a suggestion to him, especially to the architect, we would say, take only the first four towns on our list (continuing the journey to Coutances, or returning by Rouen if there be opportunity), and he will find enough to last him a summer.[1] If he has never set foot in Normandy before we may promise him an æsthetic treat beyond his dreams. He will have his idols both of wood and stone—wood for dwelling, and stone for worship; at PONT AUDEMER, the simple domestic architecture of the middle ages, and at LISIEUX, the more ornate and luxurious; passing on to CAEN, he will have (in ecclesiastical

[1] The architecture of Rouen, which is better known to our countrymen than that of any other town in Normandy, is later than that of Caen or Bayeux. Notwithstanding the magnificence of its cathedral, we venture to say that there is nothing in all Rouen to compare with the norman romanesque of the latter towns.

architecture) the memorial churches of William the Conqueror, and, in the neighbouring city of BAYEUX (in one building), examples of the 'early,' as well as the more elaborate, gothic of the middle ages.

If the architect, or art student, will but make this little pilgrimage in its integrity, if he will, like Christian, walk in faith—turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, and shunning the broad road which leads to destruction—he will be rewarded.

There are two paths for the architect in Normandy, as elsewhere—paths which we may call the 'simple right' and the 'elaborate wrong,' and the right path is sometimes as difficult to follow as the path of virtue.

But both artist and amateur will revel alike in the beauty of landscape, in the variety of form and colour of the old buildings, and in the costume of the people; and we cannot imagine a more pleasant and complete change from the

heat and pressure of a London season than to drop down (suddenly, as it were, like a bird making a swoop in the air), into the midst of the quiet, primitive population of a town like Pont Audemer, not many miles removed from the English coast, but at least a thousand in the habits and customs of the people. An artist of any sensibility could scarcely do it, the shock would be too great, the delight too much to be borne; but the ordinary reader, who has prepared his mind to some extent by books of travel, or the tourist, who has come out simply for a holiday, may enjoy the change as he never enjoyed anything before.

In the following pages we do not profess to describe each place on the route we have suggested, but rather to record a few notes, made at various times during a sojourn in Normandy; notes—not intended to be exhaustive, or even as complete and comprehensive in description, as ordinary books of travel, but which—written in

the full enjoyment of summer time in this country, in sketching in the open air, and in the exploration of its mediæval towns—may perchance impart something of the author's enthusiasm to his unknown readers, when scattered upon the winds of a publisher's breeze.

CHAPTER II.

PONT AUDEMER.

ABOUT one hundred and fifty miles in a direct line from the door of the Society of British Architects in Conduit Street, London (and almost unknown, we venture to say, to the majority of its members), sleeps the little town of PONT AUDEMER, with its quaint old gables, its tottering houses, its Gothic 'bits,' its projecting windows, carved oak galleries, and streets of time-worn buildings—centuries old. Old dwellings, old customs, old

caps, old tanneries, set in a landscape of bright green hills.[1]

'Old as the hills,' and almost as unchanged in aspect, are the ways of the people of Pont Audemer, who dress and tan hides, and make merry as their fathers did before them. For several centuries they have devoted themselves to commerce and the arts of peace, and in the enthusiasm of their business have desecrated one or two churches into tanneries. But they are a conservative and primitive people, loving to do as their ancestors did, and to dwell where they dwelt; they build their houses to last for several generations, and take pride and interest in the 'family mansion,' a thing unknown and almost impossible amongst the middle classes of most communities.

Pont Audemer was once warlike; it had its

[1] 'I am not enthusiastic about gutters and gables, and object to a population composed exclusively of old women,' wrote the author of 'Miss Carew;' but she could not have seen Pont Audemer.

MARKET PLACE, PONT AUDEMER.

castle in feudal times (destroyed in the 14th century), and the legend exists that cannon was here first used in warfare. It has its history of wars in the time of the Norman dukes, but its aspect is now quiet and peaceful, and its people appear happy and contented; the little river Rille winds about it, and spreads its streamlets like branches through the streets, and sparkles in the evening light. Like Venice, it has its 'silent highways;' like Venice, also, on a smaller and humbler scale, it has its old façades and lintels drooping to the water's edge; like Venice, too, we must add, that it has its odours here and there—odours not always proceeding from the tanneries.

In the chief place of the *arrondissement*, and in a rapidly increasing town, containing about six thousand inhabitants; with a reputation for healthiness and cheapness of living, and with a railway from Paris, we must naturally look for changes and modern ways; but Pont Audemer is

still essentially old, and some of its inhabitants wear the caps, as in our illustration, which were sketched only yesterday in the market-place.

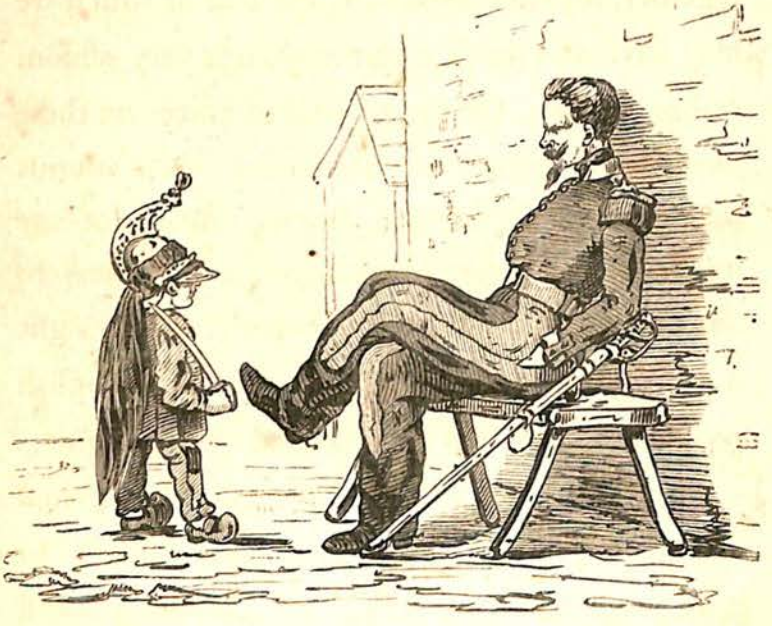
If we take up our quarters at the old-fashioned inn called the *Pôt d'Étain*, we shall find much to remind us of the 15th century. If we take a walk by the beautiful banks of the Rille on a summer's evening, or in the fields where the peasants are at work, we shall find the aspect curiously English, and in the intonation of the voices the resemblance is sometimes startling; we seem hardly amongst foreigners — both in features and in voice there is a strong family likeness. There is a close tie of blood relationship no doubt, of ancient habits and natural tastes; but, in spite of railways and steamboats, the two peoples know very little of each other.

That young girl with the plain white cap fitting close to her hair—who tends the flocks on the hill side, and puts all her power and energy into the little matter of knitting a stock-

ing—is a Norman maiden, a lineal descendant, it may be, of some ancient house, whose arms we may find in our own heraldic albums. She is noble by nature, and has the advantage over her coroneted cousins in being permitted to wear a white cap out of doors, and an easy and simple costume; in the fact of her limbs being braced by a life spent in the open air, and her head not being plagued with the proprieties of May Fair. She is pretty; but what is of more importance she knows how to cook, and she has a little store of money in a bank. She has been taught enough for her station, and has few wishes beyond it; and some day she will marry Jean, and happy will be Jean.

That stalwart warrior (whom we see on the next page), sunning himself outside his barrack door, having just clapped his helmet on the head of a little boy in blouse and sabots, is surely a near relation to our guardsman; he is certainly brave, he is full of fun and intelligence, he very

seldom takes more wine than is good for him, and a game at dominoes delights his soul.



But it is in the market-place of Pont Audemer that we shall obtain the best idea of the place and of the people.

On market mornings and on fête days, when the *Place* is crowded with old and young,—when all the caps (of every variety of shape,

from the 'helmet' to the *bonnet-rouge*), and all the old brown coats with short tails—are collected together, we have a picture, the like of which we may have seen in rare paintings, but very seldom realize in life. Of the tumult of voices on these busy mornings, of the harsh discordant sounds that sometimes fill the air, we must not say much, remembering their continual likeness to our own; but viewed, picturesquely, it is a sight not to be forgotten, and one that few English people are aware can be witnessed so near home.

Here the artist will find plenty of congenial occupation, and opportunities (so difficult to meet with in these days) of sketching both architecture and people of a picturesque type—groups in the market-place, groups down by the river fishing under the trees, groups at windows of old hostelries, and seated at inn doors; horses in clumsy wooden harness; calves and pigs, goats and sheep; women at fruit stalls, under tents and coloured umbrellas; piles upon piles of baskets,

a wealth of green things, and a bright fringe of fruit and flowers, arranged with all the fanciful grace of "*les dames des halles*," in Paris.[1]

All this, and much more the artist finds to his hand, and what does the architect discover? First of all, that if he had only come here before he might have saved himself an immensity of thought and trouble, for he would have found such suggestions for ornament in wood carving, for panels, doorways, and the like, of so good a pattern, and so old, that they are new to the world of to-day; he would have found houses built out over the rivers, looking like pieces of old furniture, ranged side by side—rich in colour and wonderfully preserved, with their wooden gables, carved in oak of the fifteenth century, supported by massive timbers, sound and strong, of even older date. He would see many of these

[1] The brightness and cleanliness of the peasant and market-women, is a pleasant feature to notice in Normandy.

houses with windows full of flowers, and creepers twining round the old eaves; and long drying-poles stretched out horizontally, with gay-coloured clothes upon them, flapping in the wind—all contrasting curiously with the dark buildings.

But he would also find some houses on the verge of ruin. If he explored far enough in the dark, narrow streets, where the rivers flow under the windows of empty dwellings; he might see them tottering, and threatening downfall upon each other—leaning over and casting shadows, black and mysterious upon the water—no line perpendicular, no line horizontal, the very beau-ideal of picturesque decay—buildings of which Longfellow might have sung as truly as of Nuremberg,—

> "Memories haunt thy pointed gables,
> Like the rooks which round them throng."

In short, he would find Pont Audemer, and the neighbouring town of Lisieux, treasure houses

of old mysterious 'bits" of colour and form, suggestive of simple domestic usage in one building, and princely grandeur in another—strength and simplicity, grace and beauty of design—all speaking to him of a past age with the eloquence of history.

Let us look well at these old buildings, many of them reared and dwelt in by men of humble birth and moderate means — (men who lived happily and died easily without amassing a fortune)—let us, if we can, without too much envy, think for a moment of the circumstances under which these houses were built. To us, to many of us, who pay dearly for the privilege of living between four square walls (so slight and thin sometimes, that our neighbours are separated from us by sight, but scarcely by sound)—walls that we hire for shelter, from necessity, and leave generally without reluctance; that we are prone to cover with paper, in the likeness of oak and marble, to hide their mean-

ness—these curious, odd-shaped interiors, with massive walls, and solid oak timbers, are especially attractive. How few modern rooms, for instance, have such niches in them, such seats in windows and snug corners, that of all things make a house comfortable. Some of these rooms are twenty feet high, and are lighted from windows in surprising places, and of the oddest shapes. What more charming than this variety, to the eye jaded with monotony; what more suggestive, than the apparently accidental application of Gothic architecture to the wants and requirements of the age.[1]

We will not venture to say that these old

[1] It is worthy of note that the very variety and irregularity that attracts us so much in these buildings does not meet with universal approval in the French schools. In the '*Grammaire des Arts du Dessin*,' M. Charles Blanc lays down as an axiom, that "sublimity in architecture belongs to three essential conditions—simplicity of surface, straightness, and continuity of line." Nevertheless we find many modern French houses built in the style of the 13th and 14th century; especially in Lower Normandy.

buildings are altogether admirable from an architect's point of view, but to us they are delightful, because they were designed and inhabited by people who had time to be quaint, and could not help being picturesque. And if these old wooden houses seem to us wanting (as many are wanting) in the appliances and fittings which modern habits have rendered necessary, it was assuredly no fault of the 15th-century architect. They display both in design and construction, most conspicuously, the elements of common sense in meeting the requirements of their own day, which is, as has been well remarked, "the one thing wanting to give life to modern architecture;" and they have a character and individuality about them which renders almost every building unique. Like furniture of rare design they bear the direct impress of their maker. They were built in an age of comparative leisure, when men gave their hearts to the meanest, as well as to the mightiest, work

of their hands; in an age when love, hope, and a worthy emulation moved them, as it does not seem to move men now; in an age, in short, when an approving notice in the columns of the '*Builder*' newspaper, was not a high aspiration.

But in nothing is the attraction greater to us, who are accustomed to the monotonous perspective of modern streets, than the irregularity of the *exteriors*, arising from the independent method of construction; for, by varying the height and pattern of each façade, the builders obtained to almost every house what architects term the 'return,' to their cornices and mouldings, i.e., the corner-finish and completeness to the most important projecting lines. And yet these houses are evidently built with relation to each other; they generally harmonize, and set off, and uphold each other, just as forest trees form themselves naturally into groups for support and protection.

All this we may see at a distance, looking

down the varied perspective of these streets of clustering dwellings; and the closer we examine them, the more we find to interest, if not to admire. If we gain little in architectural knowledge, we at least gain pleasure, we learn *the value of variety in its simplest forms*, and notice how easy it would be to relieve the monotony of our London streets; we learn, too, the artistic value of high-pitched roofs, of contrast in colour (if it be only of dark beams against white plaster) and of *meaning* in every line of construction.

These, and many more such, sheaves we may gather from our Norman harvest, but we must haste and bind them, for the winds of time are scattering fast. Pont Audemer is being modernised, and many an interesting old building is doomed to destruction; whilst cotton-mills and steam-engines, and little white villas amongst the trees, black coats and parisian bonnets, all tend to blot out the memories of mediæval days.

Let us make the most of the place whilst there is time—and let us, before we pass on to Lisieux, add one picture of Pont Audemer in the early morning—a picture which every year will seem less real.[1]

There are few monuments or churches to examine, and when we have seen the stained-glass windows in the fine old church of St. Ouen, and walked by the banks of the Rille, to the ruins of a castle (of the twelfth century) at Montfort; we shall have seen the chief objects of interest, in what Murray laconically describes as, 'a prettily situated town of 5400 inhabitants, famed for its tanneries.'

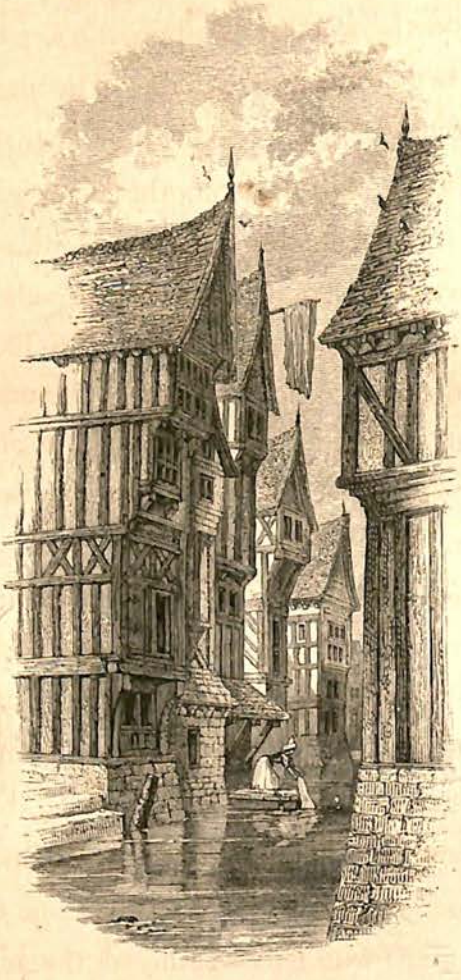
Early morning at Pont Audemer.

That there is 'nothing new under the sun,' may perhaps be true of its rising; nevertheless, a

[1] There is a great change in the aspect of Pont Audemer during the last year or two; streets of new houses having sprung up, hiding some of the best old work from view; and one whole street of wooden houses having been lately taken down.

new sensation awaits most of us, if we choose to see it under various phases. The early morning at Pont Audemer is the same early morning that breaks upon the unconscious inhabitants of a London street; but the conditions are more delightful and very much more picturesque; and we might be excused for presenting the picture on the simple ground that it treats of certain hours out of the twenty-four, of which most of us know nothing, and in which (such are the exigencies of modern civilization) most of us do nothing.

A storm passed over the town one night in August, which shook the great rafters of the old houses, and made the timbers strain; the water flowed from them as from the sides of a ship—one minute they were illuminated, the next, they were in blackest gloom. In two or three hours it has all passed away, and as we go out into the silent town, and cross the street where it forms a bridge over the Rille (the spot from which the next sketch was taken), a faint gleam of light



OLD HOUSES, PONT AUDEMER

appears upon the water, and upon the wet beams of one or two projecting gables. The darkness and the 'dead' silence are soon to be disturbed—one or two birds fly out from the black eaves, a rat crosses the street, some distant chimes come upon the wind, and a faint clatter of sabots on the wet stones; the town clock strikes half-past three, and the watchman puts out his lantern, and goes to sleep. The morning is breaking on Pont Audemer, and it is the time for surprises—for the sudden appearance of a gable-end, which just now was shadow, for the more gradual, but not less curious, formation of a street in what seemed to be space; for the sudden creation of windows in dead walls; for the turning of fantastic shadows into palpable carts, baskets, piles of wood, and the like; and for the discovery of a number of coiled-up dogs (and one or two coiled-up men) who had weathered the night in sheltered places.

But the grey light is turning fast to gold, the

warmer tints begin to prevail, the streets leading eastward are gleaming, and the hills are glistening in their bright fresh green.[1] The sweet morning air welcomes us as we leave the streets and its five thousand sleepers, and pass over another bridge and out by the banks of the Rille, where the fish are stirring in the swollen stream, and the lilies are dancing on the water. The wind blows freshly through the trees, and scatters the raindrops thickly; the clouds, the last remnant of the night's storm, career through a pale blue space, the birds are everywhere on the wing, cattle make their appearance in the landscape, and peasants are already to be seen on the roads leading to the town.

Suddenly—with gleams of gold, and with a rushing chorus of insect life, and a thousand

[1] There is one peculiarity about the position of Pont Audemer which is charming to an artist; the streets are ended by hills and green slopes, clothed to their summits with trees, which are often in sunshine, whilst the town is in shadow.

voices in the long grass on the river's bank—the day begins.[1] It is market-morning, and we will go a little way up the hill to watch the arrivals —a hill, from which there is a view over town and valley; the extent and beauty of which it would be difficult to picture to the reader, in words. Listen! for there is already a cavalcade coming down the hill; we can see it at intervals through the trees, and hear men's voices, the laughter of women, the bleating of calves, and the crushing sound of wheels upon the road. It is a peaceful army, though the names of its leaders (if we heard them), might stir up warlike memories—there are Howards and Percys amongst them, but there is no clash of arms; they come of a brave lineage, their ancestors fought well under the walls of Pont Audemer; but they

[1] We, human creatures, little know what high revel is held at four o'clock on a summer's morning, by the birds of the air and the beasts of the field; when their tormentors are asleep.

have laid down their arms for centuries—their end is commerce and peace.

Let us stand aside under the lime trees, and see them pass. But they are making a halt, their horses go straight to the water-trough, and the whole cavalcade comes to a stand; the old women in the carts (wearing starched caps a foot high) with baskets of eggs, butter, cheeses, and piles of merchandise, sit patiently until the time comes to start again; and the drivers, in blouses and wooden sabots, lounge about and smoke, or sit down to rest. The young girls, who accompany the expedition and who will soon take their places in the market, now set to work systematically to perform their toilettes, commencing by washing their feet in a stream, and putting on the shoes and stockings which they had carried during their wet march; then more ablutions, with much fun, and laughter, and tying up of tresses, and producing from baskets of those wonderful caps which we have sketched

so often—*soufflés* of most fantastic shape and startling dimensions. This was the crowning work, the picture was complete: bright, fresh, morning faces, glowing under white caps; neat grey or blue dresses with white bodices, or coloured handkerchiefs; grey stockings, shoes with buckles, and a silver cross, a rosary, or a flower. We must not quite forget the younger men (with coats, not blouses), who plumed themselves in a rough way, and wore wonderful felt hats; nor, above all, a peep through the trees behind the group, far away down the valley, at the gables and turrets of Pont Audemer, glistening through a cloud of haze. This is all we need describe, a word more would spoil the picture; like one of Edouard Frère's paintings of "Cottage Life in Brittany," the charm and pathos of the scene lie in its simplicity and harmony with Nature.

If we choose to stay until the day advances, we may see more market-people come crowding

in, and white caps will crop up in the distance through the trees, till the green meadows blossom with them, and sparkle like a lawn of daisies; we may hear the ringing laughter of the girls to whom market day seems an occasion of great rejoicing, and we may be somewhat distracted with the steady droning patois of the old women; but we come to see rather than to hear, and, returning to the town for the last time, we take our station at the corner of the market-place, and make a sketch of a group of Norman maidens who are well worth coming out to see.

CHAPTER III.

LISIEUX.

'Oh! the pleasant days, when men built houses after their own minds, and wrote their own devices on the walls, and none laughed at them; when little wooden knights and saints peeped out from the angles of gable-ended houses, and every street displayed a store of imaginative wealth.'—*La Belle France.*

WE must now pass on to the neighbouring town of Lisieux, which will be found even more interesting than Pont Audemer in examples of domestic architecture of the middle ages; resisting with difficulty a passing visit to Pont l'Evêque, another old town a few miles distant. "Who does not know Pont

l'Evêque," asks an enthusiastic Frenchman, "that clean little smiling town, seated in the midst of adorable scenery, with its little black, white, rose-colour and blue houses? One sighs and says 'It would be good to live here,' and then one passes on and goes to amuse oneself"—at Trouville-sur-mer!

If we approach Lisieux by the road from Pont Audemer (a distance of about twenty-six miles) we shall get a better impression of the town than if riding upon the whirlwind of an express train; and we shall pass through a prettily-wooded country, studded with villas and comfortable-looking houses, surrounded by pleasant fruit and flower gardens — the modern abodes of wealthy manufacturers from the neighbouring towns, and also of a few English families.

We ought to come quietly through the suburbs of Lisieux, if only to see how its 13,000 inhabitants are busied in their woollen and cloth factories; how they have turned the old timber-

framed houses of feudal times into warehouses; how the banners and signs of chivalry are desecrated into trade-marks, and how its inhabitants are devoting themselves heart and soul to the arts of peace. We should then approach the town by picturesque wooden bridges over the rivers which have brought the town its prosperity, and see some isolated examples of carved woodwork in the suburbs; in houses surrounded by gardens, which we should have missed by any other road.[1]

The churches at Lisieux are scarcely as interesting to us as its domestic architecture; but we must not neglect to examine the pointed Gothic of the 13th century in the cathedral of St. Pierre. The door of the south transept, and one of the doors under the western towers (the one on the

[1] The approach to Lisieux from the railway station is singularly uninteresting; a new town of common red brick houses, of the Coventry or Birmingham pattern, having lately sprung up in this quarter.

right hand) is very beautiful, and is quite mauresque in the delicacy of its design. The interior is of fine proportions, but is disfigured with a coat of yellow paint; whilst common wooden seats (of churchwardens' pattern) and wainscotting have been built up against its pillars, the stone work having been cut away to accommodate the painted wood. There are some good memorial windows; one of Henry II. being married to Eleanor (1152); and another of Thomas-à-Becket visiting Lisieux when exiled in 1169.

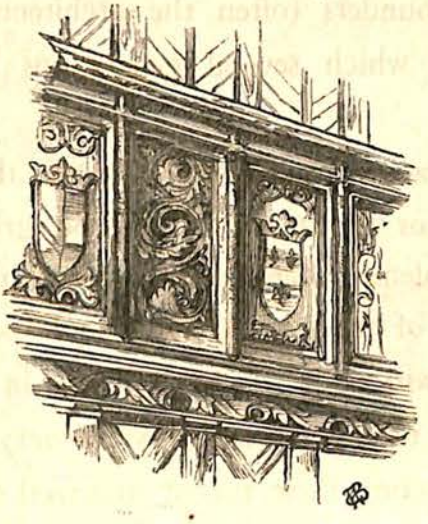
The church of St. Jacques with its fine stained-glass, the interior of which is much plainer than St. Pierre, will not detain us long; it is rather to such streets as the celebrated '*Rue aux Fèvres*' that we are attracted by the decoration of the houses, and their curious construction. There is one house in this street, the entire front of which is covered with grotesquely carved figures, intricate patterns, and graceful pillars. The exterior wood-work is blackened with age, and

the whole building threatens to fall upon its present tenant—the keeper of a café. The beams which support the roof inside are also richly decorated.

To give the reader any idea of the variety of the wooden houses at Lisieux would require a series of drawings or photographs: we can do little more in these pages than point out these charming corners of the world where something is still left to us of the work of the middle ages.

The general character of the houses is better than at Pont Audemer, and the style is altogether more varied. Stone as well as wood is used in their construction, and the rooms are more commodious and more elaborately decorated. But the exterior carving and the curious signs engraved on the time-stained wood, are the most distinctive features, and give the streets their picturesque character. Here we may notice, in odd corners, names and legends carved in wood on the panels, harmonizing curiously with the deco-

ration; just as the names of the owners (in German characters) are carved on Swiss chalêts;



and the words 'God is great,' and the like, form appropriate ornaments (in Arabic) over the door of a mosque.[1] And upon heraldic shields, on

[1] There is something not inappropriate, in the printed letters in present use in France, to the 'Haussmann' style of street architecture; some inscriptions over warehouses and shops could scarcely indeed be improved. We might point as an illustration of our meaning to the successful introduction of the word NORD, several times repeated, on the façade of the terminus of the Great Northern Railway at Paris.

old oak panels, and amidst groups of clustering leaves, we may sometimes trace the names of the founders (often the architects) of the houses in which several generations lived and died.

The strange familiarity of some of these crests and devices (lions, tigers, dragons, griffins, and other emblems of ferocity), the English character of many of the names, and the Latin mottos, identical with some in common use in England, may give us a confused and not very dignified idea respecting their almost universal use by the middle classes in England. M. Taine, a well-known french writer, remarks that 'c'est loin du monde que nous pouvons jugez sainement des illusions dont nous environt,' and perhaps it is from Lisieux that we may best see ourselves, wearing 'coats of arms.'

It is considered by many an unmeaning and unjust phrase to call the nineteenth century 'an age of shams,' but it seems appropriate enough

when we read in newspapers daily, of 'arms found' and 'crests designed;' and when we consider the extent of the practice of assuming them, or rather we should say, of having them 'found,' we cannot feel very proud of the fashion. Without entering into a genealogical discussion, we have plenty of evidence that the Normans held their lands and titles from a very early date, and that after the Conquest their family arms were spread over England; but not in any measure to the extent to which they are used amongst us. In these days nearly every one has a 'crest' or a 'coat of arms.'[1] Do the officials of Heralds' College (we may ask in parenthesis) believe in their craft? and does the tax collector ever receive 13*s.* 4*d.* for imaginary honours? Such things did not, and could not, exist in mediæval times, in the days

[1] We lately saw an english crest, bearing the motto "Courage without fear;" a piece of tautology, surely of modern manufacture?

when every one had his place from the noble to the vassal, when every man's name was known and his title to property, if he had any, clearly defined. A 'title' in those days meant a title to land, and an acceptance of its responsibilities. How many "titled" people in these days possess the one, or accept the other?

It would seem reserved for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to create a state of society when the question 'Who is he?' has to be perpetually asked and not always easily answered; in a word, to foster and increase to its present almost overwhelming dimensions a great middle-class of society without a name or a title, or even a home to call its own.

It was assuredly a good time when men's lives and actions were handed down, so to speak, from father to son, and the poor man had his '*locum tenens*' as well as the rich; and how he loved his own dwelling, how he decked it with ornament according to his taste or his means, how he

watched over it and preserved it from decay; how, in short, his pride was in his own hearth and home—these old buildings tell us.

The conservative influence of all this on his character (which, although we are in France, we must call 'home-feeling'), its tendency to contentment and self-respect, are subjects suggestive enough, but on which we must not dwell. It flourished during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and it declined when men commenced crowding into cities, and were no longer 'content to do without what they could not produce.'[1]

Let us stay quietly at Lisieux, if we have time, and *see* the place, for we shall find nothing in all

[1] The contrast between the present and former states of society might be typified by the general substitution of the screw for the nail in building; both answering the purpose of the modern builder, but the former preferred, because *removable* at pleasure.

It is a restless age, in which advertisements of 'FAMILIES REMOVED' are pasted on the walls of a man's house without appearing to excite his indignation.

Normandy to exceed it in interest; and the way to see it best, and to remember it, is, undoubtedly, to *sketch*. Let us make out all these curious 'bits,' these signs, and emblems in wood and stone—twigs and moss, and birds with delicate wings, a spray of leaves, the serene head of a Madonna, the rampant heraldic griffin,—let us copy, if we can, their colour and the marks of age. We may sketch them, and we may dwell upon them, here, with the enthusiasm of an artist who returns to his favourite picture again and again; for we have seen the sun scorching these panels and burning upon their gilded shields; and we have seen the snow-flakes fall upon these sculptured eaves, silently, softly, thickly—like the dust upon the bronze figures of Ghiberti's gates at Florence—so thickly fall, so soon disperse, leaving the dark outlines sharp and clear against the sky; the wood almost as unharmed as the bronze.

But more interesting, perhaps, to the traveller

who sees these things for the first time, more charming than the most exquisite Gothic lines, more fascinating than their quaint aspect, more attractive even than their colour or their age, are the associations connected with them; and the knowledge that they bear upon them the direct impress of the hands that built them centuries ago, and that every house is stamped, as it were, with the hall mark of individuality. The historian is nowhere so eloquent as when he can point to such examples as these. We may learn from them (as we did at Pont Audemer) much of the method of working in the 14th century, and, indeed, of the habits of the people, and the secret of their great success.

It is evident enough that in those old times when men were very ignorant, slavish, easily led, impulsive (childlike we might almost call them), everything they undertook like the building of a house, was a serious matter, a labour of love,

and the work of many years; to be an architect and a builder was the aspiration of their boyhood, the natural growth of artistic instinct, guided by so much right as they could glean from their elders. With few books or rules, they worked out their designs for themselves, irrespective, it would seem, of time or cost. And why should they consider either the one or the other, when time was of no 'marketable value,' when the buildings were to last for ages; and when there were no such things as estimates in those days? Like the Moors in Spain, they did much as they pleased, and, like them also, they had a great advantage over architects of our own day—they had little to *unlearn*. They knew their materials, and had not to endeavour, after a laborious and expensive education in one school, to modify and alter their method of treatment to meet the exigencies of another. They were not cramped for space, nor for money; they were not 'tied for time;' and they

had not to fight against, and make compromises with, the two great enemies of modern architects —Economy and Iron.

At Lisieux, as at Pont Audemer, we cannot help being struck with the extreme simplicity of the method of building, and with the *possibilities* of Gothic for domestic purposes. We see it here, in its pure and natural development, as opposed to the rather unnatural adoption of mediæval art in England, in the latter half of the 19th century. This last is, to quote a well-known writer on art, 'the worship of Gothic-run-mad' in architecture. It instals itself wherever it can, in mediævally-devised houses, fitted up with mediæval chairs and tables, presses and cupboards, wall papers, and window hangings, all 'brand-new, and intensely old;' which feeds its fancy on old pictures and old poetry, its faith on old legend and ceremonial, and would fain dress itself in the garb of the 15th century—the natural reaction in a certain class of minds

against the mean and prosaic aspects of contemporary work-a-day life.

The quiet contemplation of the old buildings in such towns as Pont Audemer, Lisieux, and Bayeux, must, we should think, convince the most enthusiastic admirers of the archaic school, that the mere isolated reproduction of these houses in the midst of modern streets (such as we are accustomed to in London or Paris) is of little use, and is, in fact, beginning at the wrong end. It might occur to them, when examining the details of these buildings, and picturing to themselves the lives of their inhabitants, in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, that the 'forcing system' is a mistake—that art never flourished as an exotic, and assuredly never will—that before we live again in mediæval houses, and realise the true meaning of what is 'Gothic' and appropriate in architecture, we must begin at the beginning, our lives must be simpler, our costumes more graceful and

appropriate, and the education of our children more in harmony with a true feeling for art. In short, we must be more manly, more capable, more self-reliant, and true to each other, and have less in common with the present age of shams.

The very essence and life of Gothic art is its realism and truism, and until we carry out its principles in our hearts and lives, it will be little more to us than a toy and a tradition.

CHAPTER IV.

CAEN.

'Large, strong, full of draperies, and all sorts of merchandise; rich citizens, noble dames, damsels, and fine churches.'

THE ancient city of Caen, which was thus described by Froissart in the middle of the fourteenth century, when the English sacked the town and carried away its riches, might be described in the nineteenth, in almost the same words; when a goodly company of English people have again taken possession of it—for its cheapness.

The chief town of the department of Calvados with a population numbering nearly 50,000—the

centre of the commerce of lower Normandy, and of the district for the production of black lace — Caen has a busy and thriving aspect; the river Orne, on which it is built, is laden with produce; with corn, wine, oil, and cider; with timber, and with shiploads of the celebrated Caen stone. On every side we see the signs of productiveness and plenty, and consequent cheapness of many of the necessaries of life; Calvados, like the rest of lower Normandy, has earned for itself the name of the 'food-producing land' of France, from whence both London and Paris (and all great centres) are supplied. The variety and cheapness of the goods for sale, manufactured here and in the neighbourhood, testify to the industry and enterprise of the people of Caen; there is probably no city in Normandy where purchases of clothing, hardware, &c., can be more advantageously made.

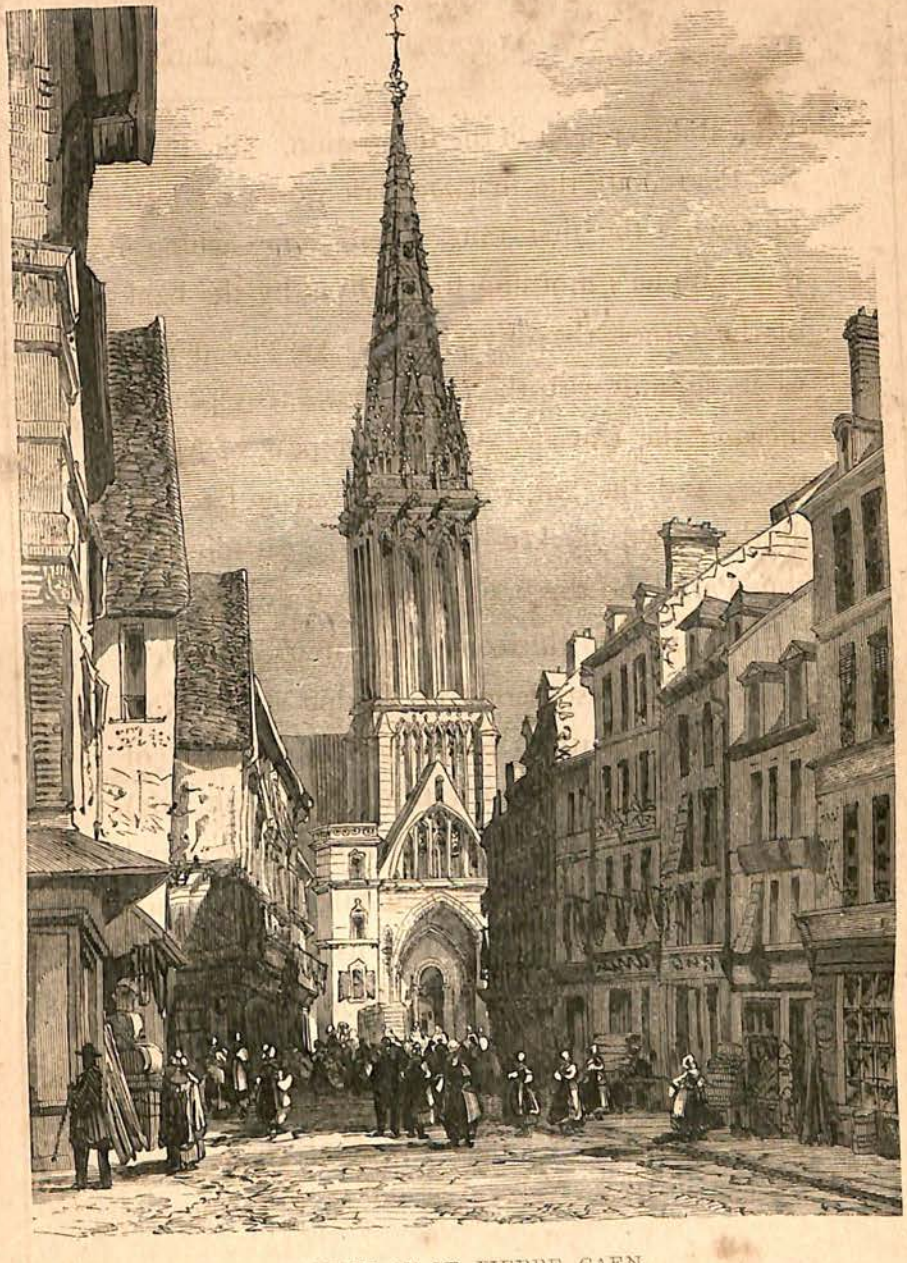
There is commercial activity at Caen and little

sympathy with idlers. If we take up a position in the *Place Royale,* adorned with a statue of Louis XIV., or, better, in the *Place St. Pierre* near the church tower, we shall see a mixed and industrious population; and we shall probably hear several different accents of Norman patois. But we shall see a number of modern-looking shops, and warehouses full of Paris goods, and even find smooth pavement to walk upon.

We are treading in the 'footsteps of the Conqueror' at Caen, but its busy inhabitants have little time for historic memories; they will jostle us in the market-place, and in the principal streets they will be seen rushing about as if 'on change,' or hurrying to 'catch the train for Paris,' like the rest of the world. A few only have eyes of love and admiration for the noble spire of the church of St. Pierre, which rises above the old houses and the market-place, with even a grander effect than any that the artist has

been able to render in the illustration. 'St. Pierre, St. Pierre,' are the first and last words we heard of Caen; the first time, when—approaching it one summer's morning from Dives, by the banks of the Orne—the driver of our calèche pointed to its summit with the pride of a Savoy peasant, shewing the traveller the highest peak of Monte Rosa; and the last, when Caen was en fête, and all the world flocked to hear a great preacher from Paris, and the best singers in Calvados.

Built in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in the best period of Gothic art in Normandy, its beautiful proportions and grace of line (especially when seen from the north side) have been the admiration of ages of architects and the occasion of many a special pilgrimage in our own day. Pugin has sketched its western façade and its 'lancet windows;' and Prout has given us drawings of the spire, '*percée au jour*'—perforated with such mathematical accuracy that, as we approach the tower, there is always one,



TOWER OF ST PIERRE, CAEN.

or more, opening in view—as one star disappears, another shines out, as in the cathedral at Bourgos in Spain.

In the interior, the nave is chiefly remarkable for its proportions; but the choir is richly ornamented in the style of the renaissance.[1] It has been restored at different periods, but, as usual in France, the whole interior has been coloured or whitewashed, so that it is difficult to detect the old work from the new. The sculptured pendants and the decorations of the aisles will attract us by their boldness and originality, and the curious legends in stone on the capitals of the pillars, of 'Alexander and his Mistress,' of 'Launcelot crossing the Sea on his Sword,' and of 'St. Paul being lowered in a Basket,' may take

[1] The 'renaissance' work at the east end of this church is considered by Herr Lübke to be 'the masterpiece of the epoch.' 'It is to be found,' he says, 'at one extremity of a building, the other end of which is occupied by the loveliest steeple and tower in the world.'

our attention a little too much from the carving in the chapels; but when we have examined them all, we shall probably remember St. Pierre best as Prout and Pugin have shewn it to us, and care for it most (as do the inhabitants of Caen) for its beautiful exterior.[1]

We should mention a handsome carved oak pulpit in the style of the fifteenth century, which has lately been erected; it is an ornament to the church in spite of its new and temporary appearance—taking away from the cold effect of the interior, and relieving the monotony of its aisles. The people of Caen are indebted to M. V. Hugot, curé of St. Pierre, for this pulpit. 'A mon arrivée dans la paroisse,' he says (in a little pamphlet sold in the church), 'un des premiers objets qui durent appeler mes soins c'était le rétablissement d'une chaire à precher.' The pulpit and staircase are

[1] It is remarkable that with all their care for this building, the authorities should permit apple-stalls and wooden sheds to be built up against the tower.

elaborately carved and decorated with statuettes, bas-reliefs, &c., which the pamphlet describes at length, ending with the information that it is not yet paid for.

The most interesting and characteristic buildings in Caen, its historical monuments in fact, are the two royal abbeys of William the Conqueror—*St. Étienne*, called the 'Abbaye aux Hommes,' and *la Ste. Trinité*, the 'Abbaye aux Dames'—both founded and built in the eleventh century; the first (containing the tomb of the Conqueror) with two plain, massive towers, with spires; and an interior remarkable for its strength and solidity—'a perfect example of Norman Romanesque;' adorned, it must be added, with twenty-four nineteenth-century chandeliers with glass lustres suspended by cords from the roof; and with gas brackets of a Birmingham pattern.

The massive grandeur, and the 'newness,' if we may use the word, of the interior of St. Étienne, are its most remarkable features; the plain marble

slab in the chancel, marking the spot where William the Conqueror was buried and disinterred (with the three mats placed in front of it for prayer), is shewn with much ceremony by the custodian of the place.

The Abbaye aux Dames is built on high ground at the opposite side of the town, and is surrounded by conventual buildings of modern date. It resembles the Abbaye aux Hommes in point of style, but the carving is more elaborate, and the transepts are much grander in design; the beautiful key-pattern borders, and the grotesque carving on the capitals of some of the pillars, strike the eye at once; but what is most remarkable is the extraordinary care with which the building has been restored, and the whole interior so scraped and chiselled afresh that it has the appearance of a building of to-day. The eastern end and the chancel are partitioned off for the use of the nuns attached to the Hôtel Dieu; the sister who conducts us round this part of the

building raises a curtain, softly stretched across the chancel-screen, and shews us twenty or thirty of them at prayers.

We can see the hospital wards in the cloisters, and, if we desire it, ascend the eastern tower, and obtain a view over a vast extent of country, and of the town of Caen, set in the midst of gardens and green meadows, and the river, with boats and white sails, winding far away to the sea.

'These two royal abbeys,' writes Dawson Turner, 'which have fortunately escaped the storm of the Revolution, are still an ornament to the town, an honour to the sovereign who caused them to be erected, and to the artist who produced them. Both edifices rose at the same time and from the same motive. William the Conqueror, by his union with Matilda, had contracted a marriage proscribed by the decrees of consanguinity. The clergy, and especially the Archbishop of Rouen, inveighed against the union; and the Pope issued an injunction, that

the royal pair should erect two monasteries by way of penance, one for monks, the other for nuns; as well as that the Duke should found four hospices, each for 100 poor persons. In obedience to this command, William founded the Church of St. Stephen, and Matilda, the Church of the Holy Trinity.'

It is usual on this spot to recount the pitiful, but rather apocryphal story of the burial of William the Conqueror, by a 'simple knight;' of its dramatic interruption by one of the bystanders, a 'man of low degree,' who claimed the site of the grave, and was appeased with 60 sous; and of the subsequent disturbance and destruction of his tomb by the Huguenots; but the artistic traveller will be more interested in these buildings as monuments of the architecture of the eleventh century, and to notice the marks of the chisel and the mason's hieroglyphics made in days so long gone by, that history itself becomes indistinct without these landmarks—marks and signs

that neither armies of revolutionists nor eight centuries of time have been able to destroy.

We speak of 'eight centuries' in two words (the custodian of the place has them glibly on his tongue), but it is difficult to comprehend this space of time; to realise the fact of the great human tide that has ebbed and flowed through these aisles for eleven generations—smoothing the pillars by its constant wave, but leaving no more mark upon them than the sea on the rocks of Calvados.

The contemplation of these two monuments may suggest a comparison between two others that are rising up in western London at the present time,—the 'Albert Memorial' and the 'Hall of Science.' They (the old and the new) stand, as it were, at the two extremities of a long line of kings, a line commencing with 'William the Bold,' and ending with 'Albert the Good;' the earlier monuments dedicated to Religion, the latter to Science and Art—the first to commie-

morate a warrior, the latter a man of peace—the first endurable through many ages, the latter destructible in a few years.[1]

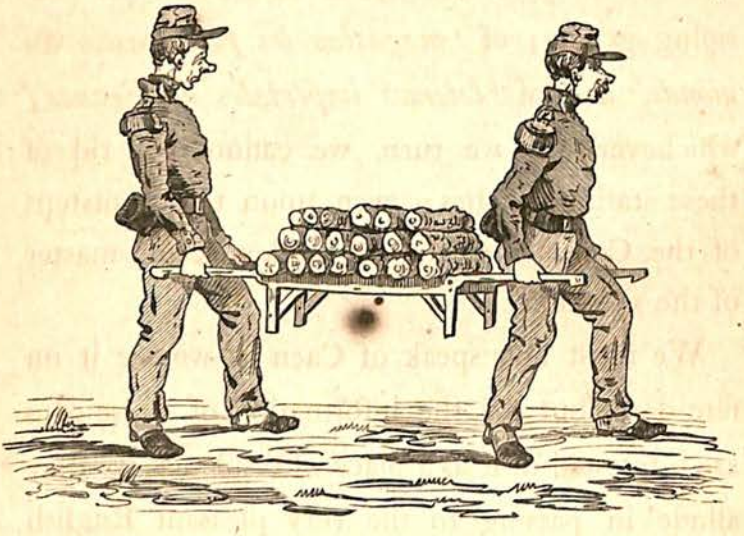
The comparison is surely worth making, for is it not curiously typical of the state of monumental art in England in the present day, that we are only doing what our ancestors did better? They erected useful, appropriate, and endurable monuments which are still crowning ornaments to the town of Caen. Are either of our 'memorials' likely to fulfil these conditions?

[1] An architect, speaking of the Albert Memorial, now appproaching completion, says:—'In ten years the spire and all its elaborate tracery will have become obsolete and effaced for all artistic purposes. The atmosphere of London will have performed its inevitable function. Every 'scroll work' and 'pinnacle' will be a mere clot of soot, and the bronze gilt Virtues will represent nothing but swarthy denizens of the lower regions; the plumage of the angels will be converted into a sort of black-and-white check-work. 'All this fated transformation we see with the mind's eye as plainly as we see with those of the body, the similar change which has been effected in the Gothic tracery of some of our latest churches.'

Not to go further into detail, there is no doubt that, elaborate and magnificent as the 'Albert Memorial' may be, it is useless, inappropriate, and out of place in Hyde Park; and that the 'Hall of Science' at South Kensington (whatever its use may be) is not likely to attract foreign nations by the external beauty of its design.

At Caen we are in an atmosphere of heroes and kings, we pass from one historical site to another until the mind becomes half confused; we are shown (by the same valet-de-place) the tomb of the Conqueror, and the house where Beau Brummel died. We see the ruins of a castle on the heights where le 'jeune et beau Dunois' performed historical prodigies of valour; and the chapel where he 'allait prier Marie, bénir ses exploits.' But the modern military aspect of things is, we are bound to confess, prosaic to a degree; we find the Dunois of the period occupied in more peaceful pursuits,

mending shoes, tending little children, and carrying wood for winter fires.



There are many other buildings and churches at Caen which we should examine, especially the exterior carving of '*St. Etienne-le-vieux;*' which is now used as a warehouse.

The cathedrals and monuments are generally, as we have said, in wonderful preservation, but they are desecrated without remorse; on every side

of them, and, indeed, upon them, are staring advertisements of 'magazines,' dedicated '*au bon diable*,' '*au petit diable*,' or to some other presiding genius; of '*magasins les plus vastes du monde*,' and of '*loteries impériales de France*;' whichever way we turn, we cannot get rid of these staring affiches; even upon the 'footsteps of the Conqueror' the bill-sticker seems master of the situation.

We must now speak of Caen as we see it on fête days, but for the information of those who are interested in it as a place of residence, we may allude in passing to the very pleasant English society that has grown up here of late years, to the moderate rents of houses, the good schools and masters to be met with; the comparative cheapness of provisions and of articles of clothing, and to the good accommodation at the principal inns. The situation of Caen, although not perhaps as healthy as Avranches, is much more convenient and accessible from England.

Caen, Sunday, August, 186–. It is early on Sunday morning, and Caen is *en fête.* We have reason to know it by the clamour of church bells which attends the sun's rising. There is terrible energy, not to say harshness, in thus ushering in the day. On a mountain side, or in some remote village, the distant sound of bells is musical enough, but here it is dinned into our ears to distraction; and there seems no method in the madness of these sturdy Catholics, for they make the tower of St. Pierre vibrate to most uncertain sounds. They ring out all at once with a burst and tumble over one another, hopelessly involved, *en masse;* a combination terribly dissonant to unaccustomed ears. Then comes the military *réveille*, and the deafening 'rataplan' of regimental drums, and the town is soon alive with people arriving and departing by the early trains; whilst others collect in the market-place in holiday attire with baskets of flowers, and com-

mence the erection of an altar to the Virgin in the middle of the square. Then women bring their children dressed in white, with bouquets of flowers and white favours, and a procession is formed (with a priest at the head) and marshalled through the principal streets and back again to where the altar to 'Our Lady' stands, now decorated with a profusion of flowers and an effigy of the Virgin.

All this time the bells are ringing at intervals, and omnibuses loaded with holiday people rattle past with shouting and cracking of whips. The old fashion and the new become mingled and confused, old white caps and Parisian bonnets, old ceremonies and modern ways; the Norman peasant and the English school-girl walk side by side in the crowd, whilst the western door of the Church of St. Pierre, to which they are tending, bears in flaming characters the name of a vendor of '*modes parisiennes*.' Men, women, and children, in gay and new attire, fill the streets and

quite outnumber those of the peasant class; the black coat and hat predominate on fête days; a play-bill is thrust into our hands announcing the performance of an opera in the evening, and we are requested frequently to partake of coffee, syrop, and bonbons as we make our way through the Rue St. Pierre and across the crowded square.

Stay here for a moment and witness a little episode—another accidental collision between the old world and the new.

An undergraduate, just arrived from England on the 'grand tour,' gets into a wrangle with an old woman in the market-place; an old woman of nearly eighty years, with a cap as old and ideas as primitive as her dress, but with a sense of humour and natural combativeness that enables her to hold her own in lively sallies and smart repartees against her youthful antagonist.[1] It is a curious contrast, the

[1] This old woman is well known at Caen, and her encounter

wrinkled old woman of Caen and the English lad—the one full of the realities and cares of life; born in revolutionary days, and remembering in her childhood Charlotte Corday going down this very street on her terrible mission to Paris; her daughters married, her only son killed in war, her life now (it never was much else) an uneventful round of market days, eating and sleeping, knitting and prayers; the other—young, careless, fresh to the world, his head stored with heathen mythology, the loves of the Gods, and problems of Euclid—taking

with the '*garçon anglais*' is matter of history amongst her friends in the town.

a light for his pipe from the old woman, and airing his French in a discussion upon a variety of topics, from the price of apples to the cost of a dispensation; the conversation merging finally into a regular religious discussion, in which the disputants were more abroad than ever,—a religion outwardly represented, in the one case by so many chapels, in the other by so many beads.

It is a '*fête*' to day (according to a notice pasted upon a stone pillar) '*avec Indulgence plénière*,'

> GRAND MESSE à 10 a.m.,
> LES VÊPRES à 3 p.m.,
> SALUT ET BÉNÉDICTION DU SACRAMENT,
> SERMON, &c.'

Let us now follow the crowd (up the street we saw in the illustration) into the Church of St. Pierre, which is already overflowing with people coming and going, pushing past each other through the baize door, dropping sous

into the '*tronc pour les pauvres*,' and receiving, with bowed head and crossed breast, the holy water, administered with a brush.

We pay two sous for a chair and take our places, under a fire of glances from our neighbours, who pray the while, and tell their beads; and we have scarcely time to notice the beautiful proportions of the nave, the carving in the side chapels, or the grotesque figures that we have before alluded to, when the service commences, and we can just discern in the distance the priests at the high altar (looking in their bright stiff robes, and with their backs to the people, like golden beetles under a microscope); we cannot hear distinctly, for the moving of the crowd about us, the creaking of chairs, and the whispering of many voices; but we can see the incense rising, the children in white robes swinging silver chains, and the cocked hat of the tall 'Suisse' moving to and fro.

Presently the congregation sits down, the

organ peals forth and a choir of sweet voices chaunts the 'Agnus Dei.' Again the congregation kneels to the sound of a silver bell; the smoke of incense curls through the aisles, and the golden beetles move up and down; again there is a scraping of chairs, a shuffling of feet, and a general movement towards the pulpit, the men standing in groups round it with their hats in their hands; then a pause, and for the first time so deep a silence that we can hear the movement of the crowd outside, and the distant rattle of drums.

All eyes are now turned to the preacher; a man of about forty, of an austere but ordinary (we might almost say low) type of face, closely shaven, with an ivory crucifix at his side and a small black book in his hand. He makes his way through the crowded aisles, and ascends the new pulpit in the centre of the church, where everyone of the vast congregation can both see and hear him.

His voice was powerful (almost too loud sometimes) and most persuasive; he was eloquent and impassioned, but he used little gesture or any artifice to engage attention. He commenced with a rhapsody—startling in the sudden flow of its eloquence, thrilling in its higher tones, tender and compassionate (almost to tears) in its lower passages—a rhapsody to the Virgin—

'O sweet head of my mother; sacred eyes!'

* * * *

and then an appeal—an appeal for us 'true Catholics' to the 'Queen of Heaven, the beautiful, the adorable.' He elevated our hearts with his moving voice, and, by what we might call the electricity of sympathy, almost to a frenzy of adoration; he taught us how the true believer, 'clad in hope,' would one day (if he leaned upon Mary his mother in all the weary stages of the 'Passage of the Cross') be crowned with fruition. He lingered with almost idolatrous emphasis on the charms of Mary, and with his eyes

fixed upon her image, his hands outstretched, and a thousand upturned faces listening to his words, the aisles echoed his romantic theme:—

> 'With my lips I kneel, and with my heart,
> I fall about thy feet and worship thee.'

A stream of eloquence followed—studied or spontaneous it mattered not—the congregation held their breath and listened to a story for the thousandth time repeated.

The preacher paused for a moment, and then with another burst of eloquence, he brought his hearers to the verge of a passion, which was (as it seemed to us) dangerously akin to human love and the worship of material beauty; then he lowered our understandings still more by the enumeration of 'works and miracles,' and ended with words of earnest exhortation, the burden of which might be shortly translated:—'Pray earnestly, and always, to Mary our mother, for all souls in purgatory; confess your sins unto

us your high priests; give, give to the Church and to the poor, strive to lead better lives, look forward ever to the end; and bow down, oh! bow down, before the golden images [manufactured for us in the next street] which our Holy Mother the Church has set up.'

With a transition almost as startling as the first, the book is closed, the preacher has left the pulpit, the congregation (excepting a few in the side chapels) have dispersed; and Caen keeps holiday after the manner of all good Catholics, putting on its best attire, and disporting itself in somewhat rampant fashion.

Everybody visits everybody else to-day, and a fiacre is hardly to be obtained for the afternoon drive in *Les Cours*, the public promenade. We may go to the Jardin des Plantes, which we shall find crowded with country people, examining the beautiful exotic plants (of which there are several thousand); to the public Picture Gallery, established at the beginning of the present century,

which contains pictures by Paul Veronese, Perugino, Poussin, and a number of works of the French school; and to the Museum of Antiquities, containing Roman remains, vases, coins, &c., discovered in the neighbourhood of Dives. There are also excursions to Bayeux, Honfleur, and Trouville for the day; and many tempting opportunities of visiting the neighbouring towns.

But we may be most amused by mixing with the crowd, or by listening to the performance on the *Place royale* of a company of foreign musicians—shabby and dingy in aspect, enthusiastic and poor—who had found their way here in time to entertain the trim holiday makers of Caen. They were of that ragged and unkempt order of slovenly brotherhood that the goddess of music claims for her own; let them call themselves 'wandering minstrels,' 'Arabs,' or what not (their collars were limp, and they rejoiced in smoke), they had certainly an ear for harmony, and a

'soul for music;' a talent in most of them, half cultivated and scarcely understood. A woman in a German, or Swiss, costume levied rapid contributions amongst the crowd, which seemed to prefer listening to this performance than to any other 'distraction,' not excepting the modern and exciting performance of velocipede races outside the town.

The streets are crowded all day with holiday people, and somewhat obstructed by the fashion of the inhabitants taking their meals in the street. We also, in the evening, dine at an open café (with a marble table and a pebble floor) amidst a clamour and confusion of voices, under the shadow of old eaves—with creepers and flowers twining round nearly every window, where the pigeons lurk and dive at stray morsels. The evening is calm and bright and the sky overhead a deep blue, but we are chattering, laughing, eating, and smoking, clinking glasses and shouting to waiters; we drown even the sound of

the church clocks, and if it were not for the little flower girls with their '*deux sous, chaque*' and their winning smiles, and for the children playing on the ground around us, we might soon forget our better natures in the din of this culinary pandemonium.

But we are in good company; three tall mugs of cider are on the next table to our own, a dark, stout figure, with shaven crown, is seated with his back to us—it is the preacher of the morning, who with two lay friends for companions, also keeps the feast.

DIVES.

Before leaving the neighbourhood of Caen, the antiquary and historically minded traveller will naturally turn aside and pay a visit to the town of DIVES, about eighteen miles distant, near the sea shore to the north-east, on the right bank of the river Dives. It is interesting to us not only as an ancient Roman town, and as being the place

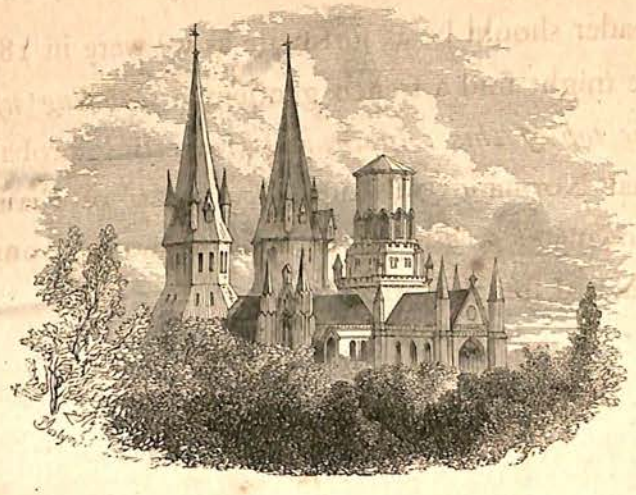
of embarkation of the Conqueror's flotilla, from whence it drifted, with favourable winds, to St. Valery—but because it possesses the remains of one of the finest twelfth-century churches in Normandy. We find hardly any mention of this church in 'Murray,' and it stands almost deserted by the town which once surrounded it, and by the sea, on the shore of which it was originally built. At the present time there are not more than eight or nine hundred inhabitants, but we can judge by the size of the old covered market-place, and the extent of the boundaries of the town, that it must have been a sea-port of considerable importance. Dives was once rich, but no longer bears out the meaning of its name; in comparison to the thriving town of Cabourg (which it joins), it is more like Lazarus sitting at the gate.

The interior of the church at Dives has been restored, repaired, and whitewashed; but neither time nor whitewash can conceal the lovely pro-

portions of the building; the pillars and aisles, and the carving over the doorways which the twelfth-century mason fashioned so tenderly have little left of his most delicate workmanship; half of the stained glass in the chancel windows has been destroyed, and the pinnacles on the roof have been broken down by rude hands. Nevertheless it is a church worth going far to see; and it will have exceptional interest for those who believe that their ancestors 'came over with the Conqueror,' for on the western wall there is a list of the names of the principal persons who were known to have accompanied him. Some of these names are very familiar to English ears, such as PERCY, TALBOT, VERNON, LOVEL, GIFFARD, BREWER, PIGOT, CARTERET, CRESPEN, &c.; and there are at least a hundred others, all in legible characters, which any visitor may decipher for himself. There is a small grass-grown church-yard surrounded by a low wall, but the tablets are of comparatively modern date.

If, before leaving Dives, we take a walk up the hill on the east side of the town, and look down upon the broad valley, with the river Dives winding southwards through a rich pasture land, flanked with thickly wooded hills—and beyond it the river Orne, leading to Caen—we shall see at once what a favourable and convenient spot this must have been for the collecting together of an army of fifty thousand men, for the construction of vessels, and for the embarkation of troops and horses, and the *matériel* of war; and, if we continue our walk, through one or two cornfields in the direction of Beuzeval, we shall find, on a promontory facing the sea, and overlooking the mouth of the river, a not very ornamental, round stone pillar placed here by the Archæological Society of France in 1861; 'AU SOUVENIR DU PLUS GRAND ÉVÉNEMENT HISTORIQUE DES ANNALES NORMANDES—LE DÉPART DU DUC GUILLAUME LE BÂTARD POUR LA CONQUÊTE DE L'ANGLETERRE EN 1066;' and, if the

reader should be as fortunate as we were in 1869, he might find a french gentleman *standing upon the top of this column*, and (forgetting probably that Normandy was not *always* part of France) blowing a blast of triumph seaward, from a cracked french horn.



CHAPTER V.

BAYEUX.

THE approach to the town of Bayeux from the west, either by the old road from Caen or by the railway, is always striking. The reader may perchance remember how in old coaching days in England on arriving near some cathedral town, at a certain turn of the road, the first sight of some well-known towers

or spires came into view. Thus there are certain spots from which we remember Durham, and from which we have seen Salisbury; and thus, there is a view of all others which we identify with Bayeux. We have chosen to present it to the reader as we first saw it and sketched it (before the completion of the new central semi-grecian cupola); when the graceful proportions of the two western spires were seen to much greater advantage than at present.

The cathedral has been drawn and photographed from many points of view; Pugin has given the elevation of the west front, and the town and cathedral together have been made the subject of drawings by several well-known artists; but returning to Bayeux after an absence of many years, and examining it from every side, we find no position from which we can obtain a distant view to such advantage as that near the railway station, which we have shewn in the sketch at the head of this chapter.

The repose—the solemnity we might almost call it—that pervades Bayeux even in this busy nineteenth century, is the first thing that strikes a stranger; a repose the more solemn and mysterious when we think of its rude history of wars, of pillage, and massacres, and of its destruction more than once by fire and sword. From the days when the town consisted of a few rude huts (in the time of the Celts), all through the splendours of the time of the Norman dukes, and the more terrible days of the Reformation, it is prominent in history; but Bayeux is now a place of peaceful industry, with about 10,000 inhabitants, 'a quiet, dull, ecclesiastical city,' as the guide books express it; with an aspect almost as undisturbed as a cathedral close. There are a few paved streets with cafés and shops, as usual, but the most industrious inhabitants appear to be the lace-makers—women seated at the doorways of the old houses, wearing the quaint horseshoe comb

and white cap with fan-like frill, which are peculiar to Bayeux.

Every building of importance has a semi-ecclesiastical character; the feeling seeming to have especially pervaded the designers of the thirteenth-century houses, as we may see from this rough sketch made at a street corner. Many houses have such figures carved in *wood* upon them, and we may sometimes see a little

stone spire on a roof top; the architects appearing to have aimed at expressing in this way their love and admiration for the cathedral, and to have emulated the Gothic character of its decorations; the conventual and neighbouring buildings harmonizing with it in a manner impossible to describe in words. Even the principal inn, called the 'Hôtel du Luxembourg,' partakes of the quiet air of the place; the walls of the *salle à manger* are covered with pictures of saints and martyrs, and the houses we can see from its windows are built and carved in stone.

The chief object of interest is, undoubtedly, the cathedral itself, for although we may find many curious old houses, everything gives way in importance and interest to this one central building. The noble west front, with its pointed Gothic towers and spires, is familiar to us in many an engraving and painting, but what these illustrations do not give us on a small scale is the beauty of the carved doorways, the cluster-

ing of the ornaments about them, and the statues of bishops, priests, and kings. Later than the cathedral itself, and 'debased in style' (as our severe architectural friends will tell us), the work on these beautiful porches has exquisite grace; the fourteenth-century sculptor gave free scope to his fancy, his hands have played about the soft white stone till it took forms so delicate and strange, so unsubstantial and yet so permanent, that it is a marvel of the sculptor's skill.[1]

The interior is 315 feet long and 81 feet high, open from one end to the other, and forms a very striking and imposing effect. 'The west end,' to quote a few words from the best technical authority, 'consists of florid Norman arches and piers, whose natural heaviness is relieved by the beautifully diapered patterns wrought upon the

[1] It was lately found necessary to repair the south door; but the restoration of the carved work has been effected with the utmost skill and care: indeed we could hardly point to a more successful instance of 'restoring' in France.

walls, probably built by Henry I., who destroyed the previously existing church by fire. Above this, runs a blank trefoiled arcade in the place of a triforium, surrounded by a clerestory of early-pointed windows, very lofty and narrow. The arches of the nave, nearest the cross and the choir, ending in a semi-circle, exhibit a more advanced state of the pointed style, and are distinguished by the remarkable elegance of their graceful clustered pillars. The circular ornaments in the spandrils of the arches are very pleasing and of fanciful variety.'

We see in the interior of this cathedral a confusion of styles—a conflict of grace and beauty with rude and grotesque work. The delicately-traced patterns carved on the walls, the medallions and pendant ornaments, in stone, of the thirteenth century, are scarcely surpassed at Chartres; side by side with these, there are headless and armless statues of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which have been painted, and

tablets (such as we have sketched) to commemorate the ancient founders of the church; and underneath the choir, the crypt of Bishop Odo, the Conqueror's half-brother, with its twelve massive pillars, which formed the foundation of the original church, built in 1077.

In the nave we may admire the beautiful radiating chapels, with their curious frescoes (some destroyed by damp and others evidently effaced by rude hands); and we may examine the bronze pulpit, with a figure of the Virgin trampling on the serpent; the dark, carved wood-work in the chancel; the old books with clasps (that Haag, or Werner, would delight in), and two quite modern stone pulpits or lecterns, with vine leaves twining up them in the form

of a cross, the carving of which is equal to any of the old work—the rugged vine stem and the soft leaves being wonderfully rendered.

The interior is disfigured by some gaudy colouring under the new cupola, and the effect of the west end is, as usual, ruined by the organ loft. There are very fine stained-glass windows, some quite modern, but so good both in colour and design, that we cannot look at them without rebelling in our minds, against the conventionality of much of the modern work in english churches.[1] It seems not unreasonable to look forward to the time when it shall be accounted a sin to present caricatures of scriptural subjects in memorial church-windows. Let us rather have the kaleidescope a thousand times repeated, or the simplest diaper pattern on ground glass, than 'Jonahs' or

[1] We might point, as a notable exception, to the memorial window to Brunel, the engineer, in Westminster Abbey; especially for its appropriateness and harmony with the building.

'Daniels,' as they are represented in these days; we are tired of the twelve apostles, so smooth and clean, in their robes of red and blue (the particular red and blue that will come best out of the melting-pot), of yellow glories and impossible temples.

The long-neglected art of staining glass being once more revived, let us hope that, with it, a taste will grow up for something better than a repetition of the grotesque.

But it is the exterior of Bayeux Cathedral that will be remembered best, the beauty and simplicity of its design; its 'sky line,' that we pointed out at a distance, at the beginning of this chapter, which (like the curve of the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, and many an english nineteenth-century church we could name), leaves an impression of beauty on the mind that the more ornate work of the Renaissance fails to give us. It is an illustration in architecture, of what we have ventured to call the 'simple right' and

the 'elaborate wrong;' like the composition of Raphael's Holy Family (drawn on the head of a tub), it was *right*, whilst its thousand imitations have been wrong.

And if any argument or evidence were wanting, of the beauty and fitness of Gothic architecture as the central feature of interest, and as a connecting link between the artistic taste of a past and present age, we could point to no more striking instance than this cathedral. It has above all things the appearance of a natural and spontaneous growth, harmonizing with the aspect of the place and with the feelings of the people.

A silence falls upon the town of Bayeux sometimes, as if the world were deserted by its inhabitants; a silence which we notice, to the same extent, in no other cathedral city. We look round and wonder where all the people are; whether there is really anybody to buy and sell, and carry on business, in the regular worldly

way ; or whether it is peopled only with strange memories and histories of the past.

On every side there are landmarks of cruel wars and the sites of battles—nearly every old house has a legend or a history attached to it ; and all about the cathedral precincts, with its old lime-trees—in snug, quiet courtyards, under gateways, and in stiff, formal gardens behind high walls—we may see where the old bishops and canons of Bayeux lived and died; the house where 'Master Wace' toiled for many unwearied years, and where he had audience with the travelling *raconteurs* of the time who came to listen to him, and to repeat far and wide the words of the historian.[1]

The silence of Bayeux is peopled with so many memories, of wars so terrible, and of

[1] The *raconteurs* of the middle ages used to travel on foot about Europe, reciting, or repeating, the last new work or conversation of celebrated men—a useful and lucrative profession in days before printing was invented.

legends so wild and weird, that a book might be written about Bayeux and called 'The Past.' We must not trench upon the work of the antiquary, or we might point out where Henry I. of England attacked and destroyed the city, and the exact spot in the market-place where they first lighted the flames of Revolution; but we may dwell for a moment upon one or two curious customs and legends connected with Bayeux.

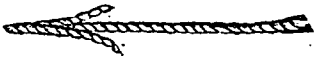
The 'Fête of the three Kings' (a remnant of a custom in the time of the Druids) is still religiously observed by its inhabitants, and incantations and ceremonies are kept up by the country people around Bayeux, especially on the eve of this fête. The time is winter, and around the town of Bayeux (as many visitors may have noticed) a curious fog or mist hangs over the fields and the neighbouring gardens, through which the towers of the cathedral are seen like phantoms; it is then that the peasants light

their torches, and both priests and people wander in procession through the fields, singing in a loud, but mournful tone, a strange and quaint ditty. Thus their fields and the crops (which they are about to sow) will be productive, and a good harvest bless the land!

We are still in the middle ages at Bayeux, we believe implicitly in witches, in good omens, and in fairy rings; we are told gravely by an old inhabitant that a knight of Argouges, near Bayeux, was protected by a good fairy in his encounter with some great enemy, and we are shewn, in proof of the assertion, the family arms of the house of Argouges, with a female figure in the costume of Lady Godiva of Coventry, and the motto, *à la fée*; and we hear so many other romantic stories of the dark ages, that history at last becomes enveloped in a cloud of haze, like the town of Bayeux itself on a winter's night.

We must now pass from the region of romance and fable to its very antipodes in realism; to the examination of a strip of fine linen cloth of the colour of brown holland, which is exhibited in the Public Library at Bayeux.

This world-renowned relic of antiquity, which Dibdin half-satirically describes as 'an exceedingly curious document of the conjugal attachment and enthusiastic veneration of Matilda,' is now kept with the greatest care, and is displayed on a stand under a glass case, in its entire length, 227 feet. It is about 20 inches wide, and is divided into 72 compartments. Every line is expressed by coarse stitches of coloured thread or worsted, of which this arrow's head



is a facsimile, and the figures are worked in various colours, the groundwork and the flesh tints being generally left white. The extraordinary preservation of the tapestry, when we consider, not only the date of the work, but the

vicissitudes to which it has been subjected, is so remarkable, that the spectator is disposed to ask to see the 'original,' feeling sure that this fresh, bright-looking piece of work cannot have lasted thus for eight hundred years.' And when we remember that it was carried from town to town by order of Napoleon I., and also exhibited on the stage on certain occasions; that it has survived the Revolution, and that the cathedral, which it was originally intended to adorn, has long been levelled with the ground, we cannot help approaching it with more than ordinary interest; an interest in which the inhabitants, and even the ecclesiastics of Bayeux, scarcely seem to share. It was but a few years ago that the priests of the cathedral, when asked by a traveller to be permitted to see the tapestry, were unable to point it out; they knew that the '*toile St. Jean*,' as it is called, was annually displayed in the Cathedral on St. John's Day, but of its historical and antiquarian interest they seemed to take little heed.

The scenes, which (as is well known) represent the principal events in the Norman Conquest, are arranged in fifty-eight groups. The legend of the first runs thus:—

Le roi Edouard ordonne à Harold d'aller apprendre au duc Guillaume qu'il sera un jour roi d'Angleterre, &c.

After the interview between the 'sainted' King Edward and Harold, the latter starts on his mission to 'Duke William,' and in the next group we see Harold, '*en marche*,' with a hawk on his wrist—then entering a church (the ancient abbey of Bosham, in Sussex), and the clergy praying for his safety before embarking, and—next, '*en mer*.' We see him captured on landing, by Guy de Ponthieu, and afterwards surrounded by the ambassadors whom William sends for his release; the little figure holding the horses being one Tyrold, a dependant of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, and the artist (it is generally supposed) who designed the tapestry. Then we see Harold received in state at Rouen by Duke William, and

afterwards, their setting out together for Mont St. Michael, and Dinan; and other episodes of the war in Brittany. We next see Harold in England, at the funeral of Edward the Confessor, and have a curious view of Westminster Abbey, in red and green worsted. After the death of King Edward, we have another group, where 'Edouard (in extremis) parle aux hommes de sa cour;' evidently an after-thought, or a mistake in taking up the designs to work in their proper order. Harold is crowned, but with an ill omen (from the Norman point of view), as represented in the tapestry by an evil star—a comet of extravagant size, upon which the people gaze with most comical expressions of wonder and alarm.

Harold began his reign well, says an old chronicler, he 'stablysshed good lawes, specyally for the defence of holy churche;' but soon he 'waxed so proud and covetouse,' that he became unpopular with his subjects.

Then follows the great historical event, of

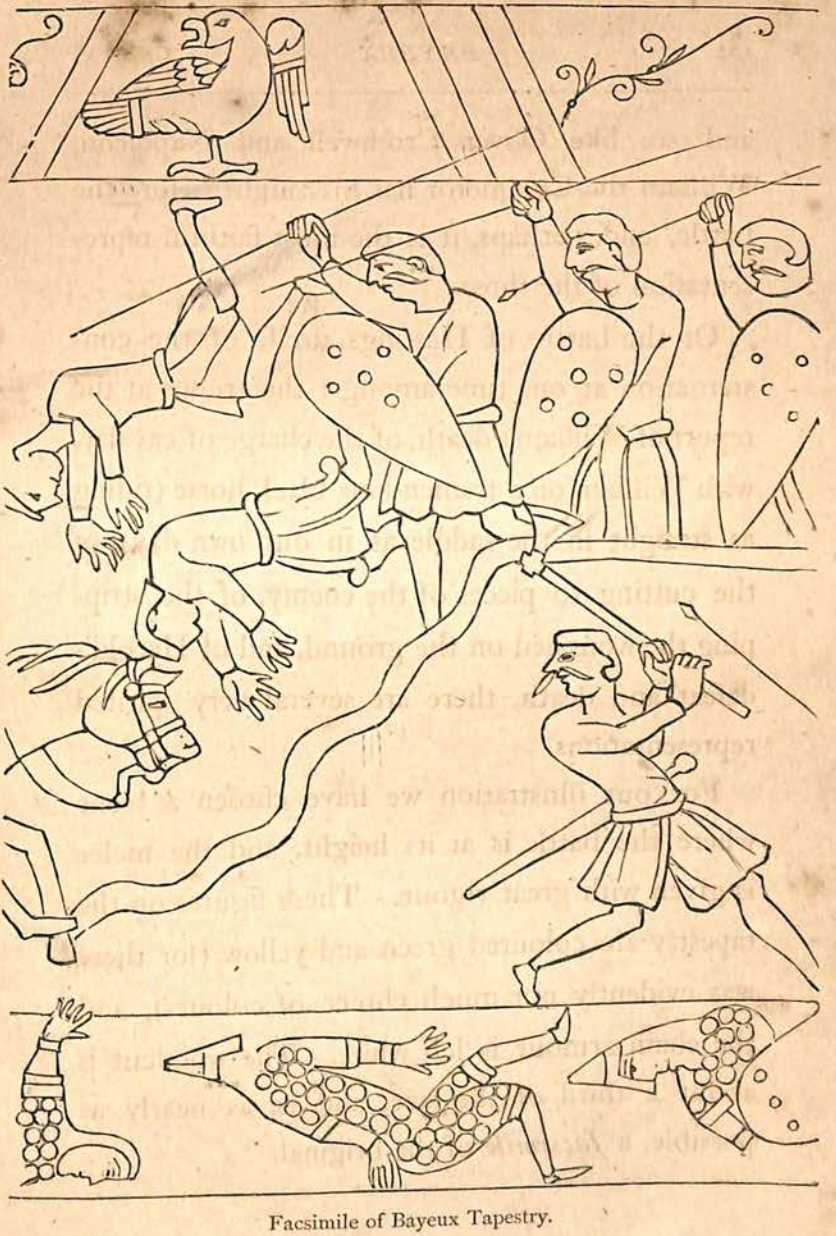
'THE INVASION OF ENGLAND BY THE CONQUEROR,' and we have all the details portrayed of the felling of trees, constructing ships, transporting of cavalry, and the like; we see the preparations for the commissariat, and the curious implements of warfare, shewing, amongst other things, the lack of iron in those days; the spades, for use in earthworks and fortifications, being only *tipped* with iron. The bustle and excitement attendant upon the embarcation are given with wonderful reality; and there is many a quaint and natural touch in the attitudes and expressions of these red and yellow men.

The landing in Pevensey bay is next given (the horses being swung out of the ships with cranes and pulleys as in the present day), and soon afterwards, the preparations for a feast; the artist at this point becoming apparently imbued with the true British idea that nothing could be done without a dinner. There must be a grand historical picture of a banquet before the fight,

and so, like Oliver Cromwell and Napoleon, William the Conqueror has his 'night before the battle,' and, perhaps, it is the most faithful representation of the three.

Of the battle of Hastings itself, of the consternation at one time amongst the troops at the report of William's death, of the charge of cavalry, with William on a tremendous black horse (riding as straight in the saddle as in our own day), of the cutting to pieces of the enemy, of the stripping the wounded on the ground, and of Harold's defeat and death, there are several very spirited representations.

For our illustration we have chosen a scene where the battle is at its height, and the melée is given with great vigour. These figures on the tapestry are coloured green and yellow (for there was evidently not much choice of colours), and the chain armour is left white. The woodcut is about a third of the size, and is, as nearly as possible, a *facsimile* of the original.



Facsimile of Bayeux Tapestry.

The last group is thus described in the catalogue:—

'ET FVGA VETERVNT ANGLI.

'Et les Anglais furent mis en fuite. Des hommes à pied, armés de haches et d'épées, combattent contre les cavaliers: mais *la défaite des Anglais est complète;* ils sont poursuivis à toute outrance par les Normands vainqueurs.

'La scène suivante représentent des hérauts d'armes à pied, et des cavaliers galoppant à toute bride pour annoncer probablement le succés du Conquérant; mais l'interruption subite du monument ne permet plus de continuer cette chronique figurée, qui allait vraisemblablement jusqu'au couronnement de Guillaume.

The *design* of the tapestry is very unequal, some of the latter scenes being weak in comparison, especially that of the *death of Harold;* the eleventh-century artist, perhaps becoming tired of the work, or having, more probably, a presentiment that this scene would be painted and exhibited annually, by English artists, to the end of time. Perhaps the most interesting and important scenes are:—first, when Harold takes the oath of allegiance to William, with his hands leaning on two ark-like shrines, full of

the relics plundered from churches; next, the awful catastrophe of the *malfosse*, where men and horses, Norman and Saxon, are seen rolling together in the ditch; and, lastly, the ultra-grotesque tableaux of stripping the wounded after the battle.

The borders on the latter part of the tapestry (part of which we have shewn in the illustration) consist of incidents connected with the battle, and add greatly to its interest. Some of the earlier scenes are very amusing, having evidently been suggested by the fables of Æsop and Phædrus; there are griffins, dragons, serpents, dogs, elephants, lions, birds, and monsters that suggest a knowledge of pre-Adamite life (some biting their own tails, or putting their heads into their neighbours' mouths), interspersed with representations of ploughing, and hunting, and of killing birds with a sling and a stone.[1]

[1] In the British Museum there is a book containing a fac-simile of the whole of this tapestry (printed in colours, for the Society of

The most striking thing about the tapestry is the charming freshness and *naïveté* with which the scenes and characters are depicted. The artist who designed it did not draw figures particularly well, he was ignorant of perspective, and all principles of colouring; but he gave, in his own way, expression to his faces, and attitudes which tell their story even without the help of the latin inscriptions which accompany them. Shade is often represented by colour, and that not always strictly in accordance with nature; thus, a red horse will be represented with one leg worked in blue, and so on; the faces and naked limbs of the warriors being worked in green or yellow, or left white, apparently as was found most convenient by the ladies of the time.

Antiquaries), where the reader may see it almost as well as at Bayeux; just as, at the Crystal Palace, we may examine the modelling of Ghiberti's gates, with greater facility than by standing in the windy streets of Florence.

Whether Queen Matilda, or the ladies of her court, ever really worked the tapestry (there is good reason to doubt that she designed the borders) is a question of so little importance, that it is wonderful so much discussion has been raised upon it; it is surely enough for us to know that it was worked soon after the Conquest. There is evidence of this, and also that Odo, Bishop of Bayeux (the Conqueror's half-brother), ordered and arranged the work to the exact length of the walls of the church, round which it was intended that it should have been placed.

CHAPTER VI.

ST. LO—COUTANCES—GRANVILLE.
(CHERBOURG.)

ON our way to St. Lo, Coutances, and Granville on the western coast of Normandy, we may do well—if we are interested in the appliances of modern warfare, and would obtain any idea of the completeness and magnificence of the French Imperial Marine—to see something of Cherbourg, situated near the bold headland of Cap de la Hague.

If we look about us as we approach the town, we shall see that the railway is cut through an extraordinary natural fortification of rocks; and

if we ascend the heights of Le Roule, we shall obtain, what a Frenchman calls, a *vue féerique du Cherbourg.* We shall look down upon the magnificent harbour with its breakwater and surrounding forts, and see a fleet of iron-clads at anchor, surrounded by smaller vessels of all nations; gun-boats, turret-ships and every modern invention in the art of maritime war, but scarcely any ships of commerce. The whole energy and interest of a busy population seem concentrated at Cherbourg, either in constructing works of defence or engines of destruction.

The rather slovenly-looking orderly that we have sketched—sauntering up and down upon the ramparts, and sniffing the fresh breezes that come to him with a booming sound from the rocks of Querqueville that guard the west side of the bay—is justly proud of the efficiency and completeness which everywhere surround him, and with a twinkle in his eye, asks if 'Monsieur' has visited the arsenals, or has ever seen a naval review at

A SKETCH AT CHERBOURG.

Cherbourg. The pride and boast even of the boys that play upon these heights (boys with '*La Gloire*' upon their hats, and dressed in a naval costume rather different from our notions of sailors), is that 'Cherbourg is impregnable and France invincible,' and, if we stay here long, we shall begin to believe both the one and the other.

There is a little difficulty, not insurmountable to an Englishman, with the assistance of his consul, in obtaining permission to visit the government works in progress, and now fast approaching completion; for the Government is courteous, if cautious, in this matter. The French people cannot help being polite; there is an English yacht riding in the harbour this morning, and the ladies, who have just come ashore, have every politeness and attention shewn to them; and the little yacht will refit, as so many do here in the summer, and take refuge again and again in this roadstead, with great con-

venience and many pleasant recollections of their reception.

If we had been upon these heights in the summer of 1858, and later in 1865, we might have seen the combined fleets of England and France in the roadstead; and, in the spring of 1865, with a good telescope, we might have witnessed a miniature naval engagement between the famous *Alabama* and the *Kearsage*, which took place a few miles from the shore.

The *Port Militaire* and the *Arsenal de Marine* at Cherbourg (which are said to be five times as large as Portsmouth), and its basins, in which a hundred sail of the line can be accommodated at one time, are sights which we scarcely realize in description, but which almost overwhelm us with their magnitude and importance, when seen from this vantage ground.

In three hours after leaving Cherbourg we may find ourselves settled in the little old-fashioned inn, called the *Hôtel du Soleil Levant*, at ST. LO,

which we shall probably have entirely to ourselves.

St. Lo, although the *chef-lieu* of the department of La Manche, appears to the traveller a quiet, second-rate manufacturing town, well-situated and picturesquely built, but possessing no particular objects of interest excepting the cathedral; although visitors who have spent any time in this neighbourhood find it rich in antiquities, and a good centre from which to visit various places in the environs. In no part of this beautiful province do we see the country to better advantage, and nowhere than in the suburbs of St. Lo, shall we find better examples of buildings of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

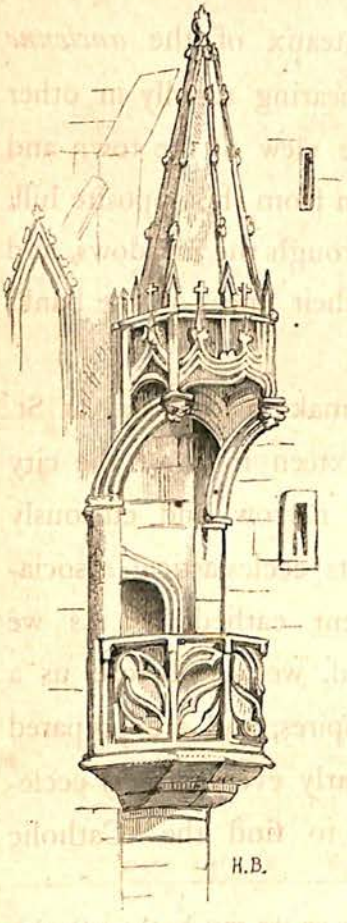
But St. Lo is dull, and there is a gloom about it that communicates itself insensibly to the mind; that finds expression in the worship of graven images by little children, and in the burning of innumerable candles in the churches. There is

an air of untidiness and neglect about the town that no trim military regulations can alter, and a repose that no amount of chattering of the old women, or even the rattle of regimental drums, seems able to disturb. They do strange things at St. Lo in their quiet, dull way; they paint the names of their streets on the cathedral walls, and they make a post-office of one of its buttresses; they paste the trees all over with advertisements in the principal squares, and erect images of the Virgin on their warehouses. The master at our hotel calls to a neighbour across the street to come and join us at table, and the people at the shops stand outside, listlessly contemplating their own wares. There are at least 10,000 inhabitants, but we see scarcely anyone; a carriage, or a cart, startles us with its unusual sound, and every footstep echoes on the rough pavement. The arrival of the train from Paris; the commercial travellers that it brings, and the red liveries of the government grooms, leading

out their horses, impart the only appearance of life to the town.

Nowhere in France does the military element seem more out of place, never did 'fine soldiers' seem so much in the way as at St. Lo. There is a parade to-day, there was a parade yesterday, and to-morrow (Sunday) there will be a military mass for a regiment leaving on foreign duty. It is all very right, no doubt, and necessary for the peace of Europe, the 'balance of power,' the consumption of pipe-clay, and the breaking of hearts sometimes; but, in contrast to the natural quiet of this place, the dust and noise are tremendous, and the national air (so gaily played as the troops march through the town) has, as it seems to us, an uncertain tone, and does not catch the sympathy of the bystanders. They stand gazing upon the pageant like the Venetians listening to the Austrian band—they are a peace-loving community at St. Lo.

But let us look well at the cathedral, at the



Exterior Pulpit at St. Lo.[1]

grandeur of its spires, at its towers with open galleries, at the rich 'flamboyant' decoration of the doorways; at its monuments, chapels, and stained glass, and above all at the *exterior* pulpit, abutting on the street at the north-east end, which is one of the few remaining in France.

If we ascend one of the towers, we shall be rewarded with a view over a varied and undulating landscape, stretching far away westward towards the sea, and southward

towards Avranches and Vire; whilst here and there we may distinguish, dotted amongst the trees, those curious châteaux of the *ancienne noblesse*, which are disappearing rapidly in other parts of France; and the view of the town and cathedral together, as seen from the opposite hill, with the river winding through the meadows, and the women washing, on their knees on the bank, is also very picturesque.

We do not, however, make a long stay at St. Lo, for we are within sixteen miles of the city of COUTANCES, with its narrow and curiously modern-looking streets, its ecclesiastical associations, and its magnificent cathedral. As we approach it, by the road, we see before us a group of noble Gothic spires, and are prepared to meet (as we do in nearly every street) ecclesiastics and priests, and to find the 'Catholic

[1] The sketch of the pulpit (made on the spot by the author) is erroneously stated in the List of Illustrations to be from a photograph.

Church' holding its head high in this remote part of France.

Everything gives way to the Cathedral in point of interest and importance. It is considered 'one of the most complete and beautiful in France, free from exuberant ornament, and captivating the eye by the elegance of proportion and arrangement. Its plan possesses several peculiar features, comprising a nave with two west towers, side aisles, and chapels, filling up what would in other cathedrals be intervals between buttresses; north and south transepts, with an octagonal tower at their intersection; a choir with a polygonal apse, double aisles, with radiating chapels, and a Lady chapel at the east end. The nave, which is 100 feet high, consists of six bays, with triforium and lofty clerestory. The effect is exceedingly grand, and is enhanced by the lateral chapels seeming to constitute a second aisle all round. The whole of this part of the building is worthy of the closest examination.

The interior of the large chapel of the south transept is very curious, circular at both ends. The choir has three bays in its rectangle, and five bays in its apse, the latter being separated by coupled piers outside each other (not touching), of wonderful lightness and beauty. The double aisle of the choir has a central range of single columns running all round it, and the effect of the intersection of so many shafts, columns, and vaultings is perfectly marvellous. There is no triforium in the choir, but only a pierced parapet under the clerestory windows, which are filled with fine early glass. There is much good glass, indeed, throughout the cathedral, and several interesting tombs.'

We quote this description in detail because the cathedral at Coutances is a rare gem, and possesses so many points of interest to the architect and antiquary.

The history of Coutances is like a history of the Roman Catholic Church, and the relics

of bishops and saints meet us at every turn. As early as the third century there are records of its conversion to Christianity; it has passed through every vicissitude of war, pillage, and revolution, until in these latter days it has earned the guide-book appellation of 'a semi-clerical, semi-manufacturing, quiet, clean, agreeable town.' There are about 9000 inhabitants, including a few English families, attracted here by its reputation for salubrity and cheapness of living.

The beauty of the situation of Coutances can scarcely be exaggerated; built upon the sides of a lofty hill commanding views over a vast extent of country, it is approached on both sides up steep hills, by broad smooth roads with avenues of trees and surrounding gardens, and is surmounted by its magnificent old cathedral, which is the last important building of the kind, that we shall see, until we reach Rouen; and one the traveller is never likely to forget, especially if he ascend the

tower, as we did, one morning whilst service was being performed below.[1]

It was our last morning at Coutances, the air was still and clear, and the panorama was superb; on every side of us were beautiful hills, rich with orchards laden with fruit, and fields of corn; and beyond them, far away westward, the sea and coast line, and the channel islands with their dangerous shores. The air was calm, and dreamy, but in the distance we could see white lines of foam—the 'wild horses' of the Atlantic in full career; beneath our feet was the open 'lantern dome,' and the sound of voices came distinctly up the fluted columns; we could hear the great organ under the western towers, the voices of the congregation in the nave, and the chanting of the priests before the altar,—

'Casting down their golden crowns, beside the glassy sea.'

[1] At the cathedral at Coutances the service is held under the great tower, and the effect is most melodious from above.

The town of GRANVILLE, built on a rock by the sea, with its dark granite houses, its harbour and fishing-boats, presents a scene of bustle and activity in great contrast to Coutances and St. Lo. There is an upper and lower town—a town on the rocks, with its old church with five gilt statues, built almost out at sea—and another town, on the shore. The streets of the old town are narrow and badly paved; but there is great commercial activity, and a general sign of prosperity amongst its seafaring population. The approach to the sea (on one side of the promontory, on which the town is built) is very striking; we emerge suddenly through a fissure in the cliffs on to the sea-shore, into the very heart and life of the place—into the midst of a bustling community of fishermen and women. There is fish everywhere, both in the sea and on the land, and the flavour of it is in the air; there are baskets, bales, and nets, and there is, it must be added, a familiar ring of Billingsgate in the

loud voices that we hear around us. Granville is the great western sea port of France, from which Paris is constantly supplied; and, in spite of the deficiency of railway communication, it keeps up constant trade with the capital—a trade which is not an unmixed benefit to its inhabitants; for in the '*Messager de Granville*' of August, 1869, we read that:—

'L'extrême chaleur de la température n'empêche pas nos marchands d'expédier à Paris des quantités considérables de poisson, *au moment même où il est hors de prix sur notre marché.* Nous ne comprenons rien à de semblables spéculations, dont l'un des plus fâcheux résultats est d'ajouter — une *affreuse odeur* aux désagréments de nos voitures publiques!'

All through the fruitful land that we have passed, we cannot help being struck with the evident inadequate means of transport for goods and provisions; at Coutances, for instance, and at Granville (the great centre of the oyster fisheries of the west) they have only just thought about railways, and we may see long lines of carts and waggons, laden with perishable commodities,

being carried no faster than in the days of the first Napoleon.

But we, who are in search of the picturesque should be the very last to lament the fact, and we may even join in the sentiment of the Maire of Granville, and be 'thankful' that the great highways of France are under the control of a careful Government; and that her valleys are not (as in England) strewn with the wrecks of abandoned railways—ruins which, by some strange fatality, never look picturesque.

Granville is a favourite place of residence, and a great resort for bathing in the summer; although the 'Établissement' is second-rate, and the accommodation is not equal to that of many smaller watering-places of France. It is, however, a pleasant and favourable spot in which to study the manners and customs of a sea-faring people: and besides the active human creatures which surround us, we—who settle down for a season, and spend our time on the sands and on the dark

rocks which guard this iron-bound coast—soon become conscious of the presence of another vast, active, striving, but more silent community on the sea-shore, digging and delving, sporting and swimming, preying upon themselves and each other, and enjoying intensely the luxury of living.

If we, *nous autres*, who dwell upon the land and prey upon each other according to our opportunities, will go down to the shore when the tide is out, and ramble about in the—

'Rosy gardens revealed by low tides,'

we may make acquaintance with a vast Lilliput community; we may learn some surprising lessons in natural history, and read sermons in shells. But, amidst this most interesting and curious congregation of fishes—a concourse of crabs, lobsters, eels in holes, limpets on the rocks, and a hundred other inhabitants of the sea, in every form of activity around us—we must not forget, in our enthusiasm for these things, the trea-

cherous tides on this coast, and the great Atlantic waves, that will suddenly overwhelm the flat shore, and cut off retreat from those who are fishing on the rocks.

This happens so often, and is so full of danger to those unacquainted with the coast, that we may do good service by relating again, an adventure which happened to the late Campbell of Islay and a friend, who were nearly drowned near Granville. They had been absorbed in examining the rocks at some distance from the shore, and in collecting the numerous marine plants which abound in their crevices; when suddenly one of the party called out—

'Mercy on us! I forgot the tide, and here it comes.'

Turning towards the sea they saw a stream of water running at a rapid pace across the sands. They quickly began to descend the rocks, but before they could reach the ground 'the sand was in stripes, and the water in sheets.' They

then ran for the shore, but before they had proceeded far, they were met by one of the fisher-girls, who had seen their danger from the shore, and hastened to turn them back, calling to them—

'The wave! the wave! it is coming—turn! turn and run—or we are lost!'

They did turn, and saw far out to sea a large wave rolling toward the shore. The girl passed them and led the way; the two friends strained every nerve to keep pace with her, for as they neared the rock, the wave still rolled towards them; the sand became gradually covered, and for the last ten steps they were up to their knees in water—but they were on the rock.

'Quick! quick!' said the girl; '*there* is the passage to the Cross at the top; but if the second wave comes we shall be too late.'

She scrambled on for a hundred yards till she came to a crack in the rock, six or seven feet wide, along which the water was rushing like a mill-

sluice. With some difficulty they reached the upper rocks, carrying the fisher-girl in their arms, and wading above their knees in water. Here they rest a moment—when a great wave rolls in, and the water runs along the little platform where they are sitting; they all rise, and mounting the rocky points (which the little Granvillaise assures them are never quite covered with water), cluster together for support. In a few moments the suspense is over, the girl points to the shore, where they can hear the distant sound of a cheer, and see people waving their handkerchiefs.

'They think the tide has turned,' says the girl, 'and they are shouting to cheer us.'

She was right, the tide had turned. Another wave came and wetted their feet, but when it had passed the water had fallen, and in five minutes the platform was again dry!

The fisherwomen of Granville are famed for their beauty, industry, and courage; we, certainly, have not seen such eyes, excepting at Cadiz, and

never have we seen so many active hard-working old women. The women seem to do everything here—the 'boatmen' are women, and the fishermen young girls.

We may well admire some of these handsome Granvillaises, living their free life by the sea, earning less in the day, generally, than our Staffordshire pit girls, but living much more enviable lives. Here they are by hundreds, scattered over the beach in the early morning, and afterwards crowding into the market-place; driving hard bargains for the produce of their sea-farms, and—with rather shrill and unpronouncable ejaculations and many most winning smiles—handing over their shining wares. It is all for the Paris market they will tell you, and they may also tell you (if you win their confidence) that they, too, are one day for Paris.

Let us leave the old women to do the best bargaining, and picture to the reader a bright

figure that we once saw upon this shining shore, a Norman maiden, about eighteen years of age, without shoes or stockings; a picture of health and beauty bronzed by the sun.[1] This young creature who had spent her life by the sea and amongst her own people, was literally overflowing with happiness, she could not contain the half of it, she imparted it to everyone about her (unconsciously, and that was its sweetness); she could not strictly be called handsome, and she might be considered very ignorant; but she bloomed

[1] In an article in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, on the 'woman of the future,' the writer argues that:—'As beauty is more or less a matter of health, too much can never be said against the abuse of it. Quite naturally the fragile type of beauty has become the standard of the present day, and men admire in real life the lily-cheeked, small-waisted, diaphanous-looking creatures idealized by living artists. When we become accustomed to a nobler kind of beauty we shall attain to a loftier ideal. Men will seek nobility rather than prettiness, strength rather than weakness, physical perfection rather than physical degeneracy, in the women they select as mothers of their children. Artists will rejoice and sculptors will cease to despair when this happy consummation is reached—let none regard it as chimerical or Utopian.'

with freshness, she knew neither ill health nor *ennui*, and happiness was a part of her nature.

This charming 'aphrodite piscatrix' is stalwart and strong (she can swim a mile with ease), she has carried her basket and nets since sunrise, and now at eight o'clock on this summer's morning sits down on the rocks, makes a quick breakfast of potage, plumes herself a little, and commences knitting. She does not stay long on the beach, but before leaving, makes a slight acquaintance with the strangers, and evinces a curious desire to hear anything they may have to tell her about the great world.

It is too bright a picture to last; she too, it would seem, has day-dreams of cities; she would give up her freedom, she would join the crowd and enter the 'great city,' she would have a stall at '*les halles*,' and see the world. Day-dreams, but too often fulfilled—the old story of centralization doing its work; look at the map of Normandy, and see how the 'chemin de fer de l'Ouest' is

putting forth its arms, which—like the devil-fish, in Victor Hugo's '*Travailleurs de la Mer*'—will one day draw irresistibly to itself, our fair 'Toiler of the sea.'[1]

'What does Monsieur think?' (for we are favoured with a little confidence from our young friend), and what can we say? Could we draw a tempting picture of life in cities—could we, if we had the heart, draw a favourable contrast between *her* life, as we see it, and the lives of girls of her own age, who live in towns—who never see the breaking of a spring morning, or know the beauty of a summer's night? Could we picture to her (if we would) the gloom that shrouds the dwellings of many of her northern sisters; and could she but see the veil that hangs over London, in such streets as Harley, or Welbeck Street, on the brightest

[1] The railway from Paris to Granville is nearly finished; and another line is in progress to connect Cherbourg, Coutances, Granville, and St. Malo.

A TOILER OF THE SEA.

morning that ever dawned on their sleeping inhabitants, she might well be reconciled to her present life!

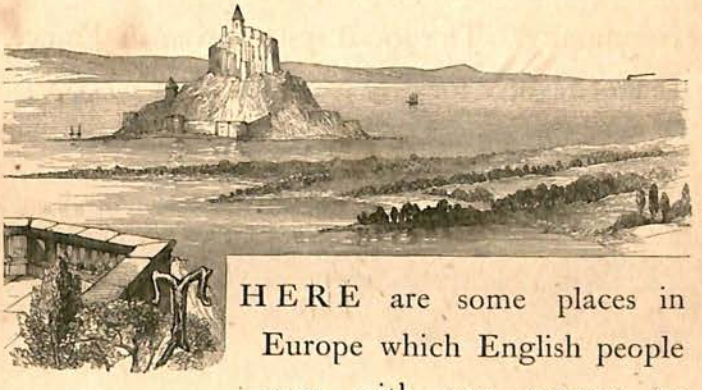
'Is it nothing,' we are inclined to ask her, 'to feel the first rays of the sun at his rising, to be fanned with fresh breezes, to rejoice in the wind, to brave the storm; to have learned from childhood to welcome as familiar friends, the changes of the elements, and, in short, to have realised, in a natural life the 'mens sana in corpore sano'? Would she be willing to repeat the follies of her ancestors in the days of the *Trianon* and Louis XIV.? Would she complete the fall which began when knights and nobles turned courtiers—and roués? Let us read history to her and remind her what centralization did for old France; let us whisper to her, whilst there is time, what Paris is like in our own day.

Do we exaggerate the evils of over-centralization? We only at present, half know them; but the next generation may discover the full

meaning of the word. There is exaggeration, no doubt; some men have lived so long in the country that they speak of towns as a 'seething mass of corruption,' pregnant of evil; and of villages as of an almost divine Arcadia, whence nothing but good can spring; but the evils of centralization can scarcely be overrated in any community. The social system even in France, cannot revolve for ever round one sun.

CHAPTER VII.

AVRANCHES—MONT ST. MICHAEL.



THERE are some places in Europe which English people seem, with one consent, to have made their own; they take possession of them, peacefully enough it is true, but with a determination that the inhabitants find it impossible to resist. Thus it is that Avranches—owing principally, it may be, to its healthiness and cheapness of living, and to the extreme

beauty of its situation—has become an English country town, with many of its peculiarities, and a few, it must be added, of its rather unenviable characteristics.

The buildings at Avranches are not very remarkable. The cathedral has been destroyed, and the houses are of the familiar French pattern; some charmingly situated in pleasant gardens commanding the view over the bay. The situation seems perfect. Built upon the extreme western promontory of the long line of hills which extend from Domfront and the forest of Audaine, with a view unsurpassed in extent towards the sea, with environs of undulating hills and fruitful landscape; with woods and streams (such as the traveller who has only passed through central France could hardly imagine) we can scarcely picture to ourselves a more favoured spot.

No district in Normandy (a resident assures us) affords a more agreeable resting place than the hills of Avranches, excepting, perhaps, the

smiling environs of Mortain and Vire. Mortain is within easy distance, as well as Mont St. Michael (which we have sketched from the terrace at Avranches, at the beginning of this chapter), and Granville, also, on the western shore of the Norman archipelago; to the extreme south is seen the Bay of Cancale in Brittany, and the promontory of St. Malo; to the north, the variegated landscape of the Cotentin—hills, valleys, woods, villages, churches, and châteaux smiling in the sunshine,—the air melodious with the song of the lark and innumerable nightingales.'

True as is this picture of the natural beauty of the position of Avranches, we will add one or two facts (gathered lately on the spot) which may be useful to intending emigrants from our shores. Within the last few years house rent, though still cheap, has greatly increased; and the prices of provisions, which used to be so abundant from Granville and St. Malo, have risen, as they

have, indeed, all over France. The railway from Granville to Paris will only make matters worse, and the resident will soon see the butter, eggs, and fowls, which used to throng the market of Avranches, packed away in baskets for Paris and London. The salmon and trout in the rivers, are already netted and sold by the pound; and the larks sing no longer in the sky. Thus, like Dinan, Tours and Pau, Avranches feels the weight of centralisation and the effects of rapid communication with the capital; and will in a few years be anything but a cheap place of residence.

However, from information gathered only yesterday, we learn that 'house rent bears favourable comparison with many English provincial towns; that servants' wages are not high, and that provisions are comparatively cheap;' also that the climate is 'very cold sometimes in winter, but more inclined to be damp; and that there is no good inn.'

Again,—'if any quiet family demands fine air, a lovely position, cheap house-rent and servants, easy and cheerful society, regular church services, and, above all, first-class education for boys, and good governesses and masters for girls, it cannot do better than settle down here.'

And again (from another point of view) that, 'after a year's residence in Normandy, I can see but little economy in it compared with England, and believe that sensible people would find far greater comfort, and but little more expense, if resident in Wales, Ireland, or some of the distant parts of our own country; if they would but make up their minds to live with as few servants, and to see as little society as is the custom abroad.'

These varying opinions are worth having, coming as they do from residents, and giving us the latest information on the subject; but our friend whom we have quoted last seems to put the case most fairly, when he says, in so many

words, 'English people had better live in their own country, if they can.'

Life at Avranches is a strange contrast to Granville. In a few hours we pass from the contemplation of fishermen's lives to a curious kind of civilization—an exotic plant, which some might think was hardly worth the transplanting. A little colony of English people have taken possession of one of the finest and healthiest spots in Europe, and upon this vantage ground have deposited, or reproduced as in a magic mirror, much of the littleness and pettiness that is peculiar to an English country town: they have brought insular prejudices and peculiarities, and unpacked several of them at Avranches.

Do we overdraw the picture? Hear one more resident, who thus tersely, and rather pathetically, puts his grievances to us, *viva voce*:—

'We quiet English people,' he says, 'generally dine early, because it is considered economical—*which it is not!*

'We live exclusively and stiffly, because it is considered proper and necessary—*which it is not!*

'We go to the expense and trouble of bringing out our families, because living is supposed to be cheaper than in England—*which practically it is not!*

'We believe that our children will be well educated, and pick up French for nothing—*which they do not!*'—&c., &c.

An amusing book might be written about English society in French towns; no one indeed knows who has not tried it, with what little society-props such coteries as those at Avranches, Pau, &c., are kept up. It varies, of course, every year, and in each place every year; but when we were last at Avranches, 'society' was the watchword, we might almost say the war cry; and we had to declare our colours as if we lived in the days of the Wars of the Roses.

The old inhabitants are, of course, 'rather particular,' and, to tell the truth, are sometimes rather afraid of each other. They are apt to eye with considerable caution any new arrival; the 'new arrival' is disposed to be equally select, and so they live together and apart, after the true English model; and indulging sometimes, it must be added, in considerable speculation about their new neighbours' business.

> 'Why were they proud—because red-lined accounts
> Were richer than the songs of Grecian years?
> Why were they proud—again we ask, aloud,
> Why in the name of glory were they proud?'

And so on; but what we might say of Avranches would apply to nearly every little English colony abroad. There are two sides to the picture, and there is a good, pleasant side to the English society at Avranches; there is also great necessity to be 'particular,' however much we may laugh.

English people who come to reside abroad are not, as a rule, very good representatives of their

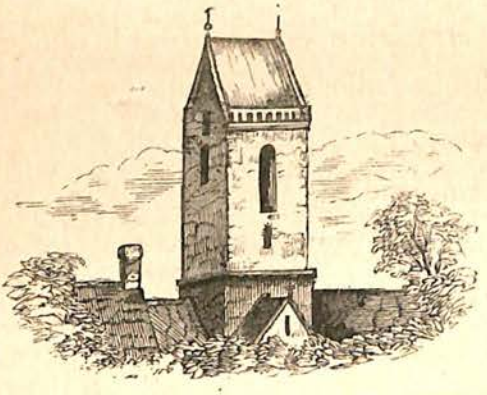
nation; neither they nor their children seem to flourish on a foreign soil, they differ in their character as much as transplanted trees; they have more affinity with the poplars and elms of France than with the sturdy oaks of England.[1]

Let us not be thought to disparage Avranches; if it is our lot to live here we may enjoy life well; and if we are not deterred by the dull and 'weedy' aspect of some of the old chateaux, we may also make some pleasant friends amongst the French families in the neighbourhood.

In summer time we may almost live out of doors, and ramble about in the fields and sketch, as we should do in England; the air is fresh and

[1] If this were the place to enlarge upon the general question of bringing children abroad to be educated, we might suggest, at the outset, that there were certain English qualities, such as manliness and self-reliance; and certain English sports, such as cricket, hunting and the like, which have less opportunity of fair development in boys educated abroad. And as to girls—who knows the impression left for life on young hearts, by the dead walls and silent trees of a French *pension*?

bracing, and the sea breeze comes gratefully on the west wind. We may stroll through shady lanes and between hedgerows, and we shall hear the familiar sound of bells, and see through the trees a church tower, such as the following



(which is indeed the common type throughout Normandy); but here the similarity to England ceases, for we may enter the building at any hour, and find peasant women at prayers.

And we may see sometimes a party of English girls from a French school, with their drawing master; sketching from nature and making minute

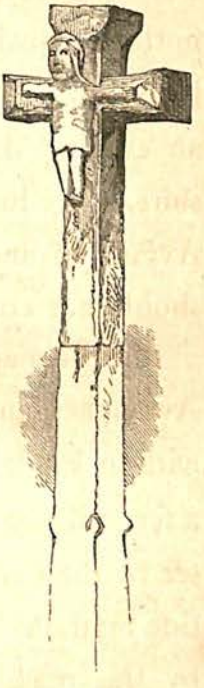
studies of the branches of trees. They are seated on a hill-side, and there is a charming pastoral scene before them,—wood and water, pasture-land and cattle grazing,—women with white caps, and little white houses peeping through the trees.

But the trees that they are studying are small and characterless compared with our own, they are scattered about the landscape, or set in trim lines along the roads: our fair artists had better be in England for this work. There is none of the mass and grandeur here that we see in our forest trees, none of the suggestive groups with which we are so familiar, even in the parks of London, planted 'by accident' (as we are apt to call it), but standing together with clear purpose of protection and support,—the strong-limbed facing the north and stretching out their protecting arms, the weaker towering above them in the centre of the square; whilst those to the south spread a deep shade almost to the ground. French trees are under an Imperial necessity to

form into line; the groves at Fontainbleau are as straight as the Fifth Avenue at New York. There are no studies of trees in all Normandy like the royal oaks of Windsor, there is nothing to compare in grandeur with the stems of the Burnham beeches, set in a carpet of ferns; and nothing equal in effect to the massing of the blue pines—with their bronzed stems against an evening sky—in Woburn Park in Bedfordshire. We may bring some pretty studies from Avranches and from the country round, but we should not come to France to draw trees.

But there are studies which we may make near Avranches, and of scenes that we shall not meet with in England. If we descend the hill and walk a few miles in the direction of Granville, we may see by the road-side the remnants of several wayside 'stations' of very early date. Let us sit down by the roadside to sketch one of these (A.D. 1066), and depict for the reader, almost with the accuracy of a photograph, its grotesque pro-

portions. It stands on a bank, in a prominent position, by the roadside; a rude contrast to the surrounding scenery. Presently there comes up an old cantonnier in a blouse and heavy sabots, who has just returned from mending the roads; he takes off his cap, crosses himself devoutly, and kneels down to pray. The sun shines upon the cross and upon the kneeling figure; the soft wind plays about them, the bank is lovely with wild flowers; there are purple hills beyond, and a company of white clouds careering through space. But the old man sees nothing but the cross, he has no eyes for the beauty of landscape, no ear for the music of the birds or the voices of nature; he sees nothing but the image of his Saviour, he kneels as he knelt in childhood before the cross, he clasps



his worn hands, and prays, with many repetitions, words which evidently bring comfort to his soul. In a few minutes the old man rises and puts on his cap, with a brass plate on it with the number of his canton, produces a little can of soup and bread and sits down on the bank to breakfast; ending by unrolling a morsel of tobacco from a crumpled paper, putting it into his mouth and going fast asleep.

Many more such scenes we could record, but they are more fitted for the pencil than the pen; the artist can easily fill his sketch-book without going far from Avranches.

But as autumn advances our thoughts are naturally turned more towards 'le sport;' and if we are fortunate enough to be on visiting terms with the owners of the neighbouring châteaux, we may be present at some interesting scenes that will remind us of pictures in the galleries at Versailles.

'With good books, a good rod, and a double

gun, one could never weary of a residence at Avranches,' says an enthusiastic settler who has found out the right corners in the trout-streams, and, possibly, the denizens of the neighbouring woods. The truth, however, is that in spite of the beautifully wooded country round, and the rivers that wind so picturesquely beneath us; in spite of its unexampled situation and its glorious view, Avranches is scarcely the spot for a sportsman to select for a residence.

In the season there are numerous sportsmen, both English and French, and occasionally a very fair bag may be made; but game not being preserved systematically, the supply is variable, and accounts of sport naturally differ very widely. We can only say that it is poor work after our English covers, and that we know some residents at Avranches who prefer making excursions into Brittany for a week's shooting. Trout may be caught in tolerable abundance, and salmon of good weight are

still to be found in the rivers, but they are diminishing fast, being, as we said, netted at night for the Paris market.[1]

It was in the shooting season of the year, when game had been unusually scarce for the sportsman and provokingly plentiful to behold in the market-place at Granville—when the last accounts we had of the success of a party (who had been out for a week) was that they had bagged 'only a few woodcocks, three partridges, and a hare or two'—that the following clever sketch appeared in the newspapers. It was great fun, especially amongst some of our French friends who were very fond of the phrase

[1] It is well that sportsmen do not always make a good bag, for another drawback to the pleasures of sport in France is the 'heavy octroi duty which a successful shot has to pay upon every head of game which he takes back to town.' For a pheasant (according to the latest accounts) he has to pay '3 f. 50 c. to 4 f.; for a hare, 1 f. 50 c. to 2 f.; for a rabbit, 75 c. to 1 f. 25 c.; for a partridge, 75 c. to 1 f. 50 c. the pound; and for every other species of feathered game, 18 c. the kilogramme.'

'chasse magnifique,' and resented the story as a terrible libel.

An enthusiastic French marquis offered one of our countrymen, whom he met in Paris, a few days' shooting, in short, a 'chasse magnifique.' He accepted and went the next day; 'the journey was seven hours by railway, but to the true sportsman this was nothing.' The morning after his arrival he was attended by the marquis's keeper, who, in answer to X.'s enquiries, thus mapped out the day's sport:—

'Pour commencer, monsieur, nous chasserons dans les vignes de M. le Marquis, où à cette saison nous trouverons certainement des grives (thrushes).' 'Et après?' says X. 'Eh bien! après, nous passerons une petite heure sur la grande plaine, où, sans doute, nous trouverons une masse d'alouettes (larks). En suite je montrerai à monsieur certaines poules d'eau (moorhens) que je connais; fichtre! nous les attraperons. Il y a là-bas aussi, dans le marais, un petit lac où, l'année passée, j'ai vu un canard, mais un canard sauvage! Nous le chercherons; peut-être il y sera.'

'But have you no partridges?' 'Des perdreaux! mais oui! je le crois bien! (il demande si nous avons des perdreaux!) Il y en a, mais ils sont difficiles. Nous en avions

quatre, mais, le mois passé, M. le Marquis en a tué un et sérieusement blessé un second. La pauvre bête n'est pas encore guérie. Cela ne nous laisse que deux. Nous les chasserons sans doute si monsieur le veut; *mais que ferons-nous l'année prochaine?* Si monsieur veut bien achever cette pauvre bête blessée, ça peut s'arranger.'

'Well, but have you no covert shooting—no hares?'

'Les lièvres? mais certainement, nous avons des lièvres. Nous irons dans la forêt, je prendrai mes chiens, et je vous montrerai de belles lièvres. J'en ai trois—*Josephine*, *Alphonse*, et le vieux *Adolphe*. Pour le moment Josephine est sacrée —elle est mère. Le petit Alphonse s'est marié avec elle, comme ça il est un peu père de famille; nous l'épargnerons, n'est-ce-pas, monsieur? Mais le vieux Adolphe, nous le tuerons; c'est déjà temps; voilà cinq ans que je le chasse!'

MONT ST. MICHAEL.

From the terrace of the Jardin des Plantes, where we are never tired of the view (although some residents complain that it becomes monotonous, because they are too far from the sea to enjoy its variety), the grey mount of St. Michael is ever before us, gleaming in the sunshine or looming through the storm. In our little sketch

we have given as accurately as possible its appearance from Avranches on a summer's day after rain;[1] but it should be seen when a storm passes over it, when the same clouds that we have watched so often on summer nights, casting deep shadows on the intervening plain—some silver-lined that may have expressed hope, some black as midnight that might mean despair—come over to us like messengers from the great rock, and take our little promontory by storm. They come silently one by one, and gather round and fold over us; then suddenly clap their hands and burst with such a deluge of rain that it seems a matter for wonder that any little creeping human things could survive the flood. And it does us good; we are thoroughly drenched, our houses and gardens do not recover their fair presence for weeks; our little prejudices and foibles are well

[1] The island, in this illustration, appears, after engraving, to be about two miles nearer the spectator, and to be less covered with houses, than it really is.

nigh washed out of us, and we are reminded of the dread reality of the lives of our neighbours on the island, who form a much larger colony than ourselves.[1]

'On no account omit a visit to Mont St. Michael,' say the guide-books, and accordingly we charter a carriage on a summer's morning and are driven in a few hours along a bad road, to the edge of the sands about a mile from the mount—the same sands that we saw depicted in the Bayeux tapestry, when William and Harold marched on Dinan. We choose a favourable time of the tide, and approach the gates at the foot of the mount dryshod.[2]

For a thousand years pilgrims have crossed these treacherous sands to lay their offerings at

[1] During the last few years the prisoners have all been removed from Mont St. Michael.

[2] The sands are so shifting and variable, that it is impossible to cross with safety, excepting by well-known routes, and at certain times of the tide; many lives, even of the fishermen and women, have been lost on these sands.

the feet of the Archangel Michael; Norman dukes and monks of the middle ages have paid their devotion at his shrine, and troops of pilgrims in all ages, even to this day, when a party of English school-girls come tripping across the bay, provided with a passport and a fee, bent upon having the terrors of the prison-house shewn to them as easily as the 'chamber of horrors' at Madame Tussaud's.

Before us, as we walk the last mile, the granite rock gradually becomes a mountain surrounded by a wide plain of sand, covered with clustering houses, towers, turrets, and fortifications, and surmounted by a Gothic church nearly 400 feet above the sea. There is a little town upon the rock, old, tumble-down, irregular, and picturesque, like Bastia in Corsica—constructed by a hardy sea-faring people, who have built their dwellings in the sides of this conical rock, like the sea-birds; and there is a little inn called the *Lion d'or*, with

windows built out over the ramparts, from which we can see the shore.

On arriving at the island we pass under two ancient towers, and into 'the court of the Lion;' then to a third gate, with its towers and battlements, and frowning portcullis; and we see, as we pass, the lion (the insignia of the knights of Mont St. Michael) carved in stone, and set into the wall. We are received in the ancient guard-room by a 'young brother,' who has (shall it be repeated?) 'turned the guard-room into a cheerful bazaar for the sale of photographs, ivory carvings and the like.' We are on the threshold of the sanctuary, at the end of our pilgrimage; we offer up no prayers, as of old, for safe deliverance from peril, but we set to work at once, and 'invest in a pocketful of little presents, which another brother (on business thoughts intent) packs for us neatly in a pasteboard box.' We are shewn the apartments in the 'Tour des Corbins,' with its grand staircase, called

'l'escalier des exils,' and the crypt one hundred feet long, built by the monks in the eleventh century; we see the great Gothic hall of the Knights of Mont St. Michael, with its carved stone-work and lofty roof, supported by three rows of pillars, beautiful in proportion, and grand in effect, although the Revolution, as usual, has left us little but the bare walls; but, as we look down upon it from a gallery, it is easy to picture the splendour of a banquet of knights in the twelfth century, with the banners and insignia of chivalry ranged upon the walls.[1] But it is now a silent gloomy chamber, and the atmosphere is so

[1] It is irresistible, here, not to compare in our minds, with these twelfth-century relics of magnificence and festivity, certain emblazoned 'civic banquets,' and the gay 'halls by the sea,' with which the child (old or young) of the nineteenth century is enraptured—the former being the realities of a chivalrous epoch; the latter, masquerades or money speculations, of a more advanced century. The comparison may be considered unjust, but it is one that suggests itself again and again, as typical of a curiously altered state of society and manners.

close and the moral atmosphere so heavy withal, that we are glad to leave it, and to ascend to another story of this wonderful pile; through the beautiful Gothic cloisters, and out upon the cathedral roof, where we suddenly emerge upon a view more wonderful in its extent and flatness than anything, save that from the cathedral tower of Chartres; before us an horizon of sea, behind us the coast line, and the hills of Avranches; all around, a wide plain of sand, and northward, in the far distance, the low dark lines of the channel islands.

That 'Saint Michael's Mount has become a popular lion, and can only be seen under the vexatious companionship of a guide and a party' is true enough; nevertheless, we can stay at the inn on the island, and thus be enabled to examine and make drawings of some of the most beautiful thirteenth-century work in the cloisters that we shall meet with in Normandy. These cloisters and open arcades (supported by upwards of two

hundred slender pillars) are carved and decorated with grotesque and delicate ornament, the capitals to the pillars are richly foliated, and the fringe that surrounds them has been well described as a 'wilderness of vines and roses, and dragons, winged and crowned.'

Like the churches in Normandy, the architecture of these monastic buildings is in nearly every style, from the simple romanesque of the eleventh century to the rich *flamboyant* of the fifteenth; and, like many of the churches, its history dates from the time when the Druids took possession of the island to the days when the storm of the Revolution broke upon its shores.

The ordinary time for visiting the rock is when the tide is out, but we have not seen Mont St. Michael to advantage until it is completely surrounded by water, as it is during the spring tides; it is then that, approached from the west, we may see it half-obscured by sea-foam, with its turrets shining through the clouds,

and the heavy Atlantic waves booming against its foundations.

The little fishing population of Mont St. Michael, and the stories they tell of the dangers of the quicksands, will while away the time in the evening and reward us for staying; and we shall see such an exhibition of hopeless *ennui* on the part of the French officers in garrison as will not soon be forgotten.

It would require a separate work to describe in detail all the buildings on the rock;[1] (it takes a day to examine the fortifications and dungeons alone); we have therefore only attempted to give the reader an idea of its general aspect; of what M. Nodier, in his '*Annales Romantiques*,' describes as 'l' effet poétique et religieux de la flèche du Mont St. Michael;' and indeed we have hardly dared

[1] The latest, and perhaps the most complete, description of Mont St. Michael, will be found in the 'People's Magazine' for August, 1869.

to picture to ourselves the complete magnificence of the basilica of the Archangel (as mariners who approached these shores must have seen it three hundred years ago, with its lofty towers of sculptured stone; and the image of its patron saint, turning towards the western sun a fiery cross of gold.

CHAPTER VIII.

MORTAIN—VIRE—FALAISE.

WE now turn our faces towards the east, and starting again from Avranches on our homeward journey, go very leisurely by diligence, through Mortain and Vire to Falaise.

The distance from Avranches to Mortain is not more than twenty miles, and takes nearly five hours; but the country is so beautiful, and the air is so fresh and bracing, that a seat in the banquette of the diligence is one of the most

enviable in life. The roof is over-loaded with goods and passengers, which gives a pleasant swaying motion to the vehicle; but the road is so smooth and even that 'nobody cares'—the rocking to and fro is soothing, and sends the driver to sleep, the pieces of string that keep the harness together will hold for another hour or two, and the crazy machine will last our journey at least.

We halt continually on the journey—once, for half-an-hour, literally 'under the lindens'—they are not yet in bloom, but they give out a pleasant perfume into the dreamy air; we are again in the open country, in the atmosphere of old historic Normandy, and bound, slowly it is true, for the birthplace of William the Conqueror; and we can read or sleep at pleasure, as our crazy diligence crawls up and creeps down every hill, and stops at every cottage by the way.

On this beautiful winding road, which is car-

ried along and between, the ridge of hills on which Avranches stands, and commands views westward over the bay to Mont St. Michael and eastward towards Alençon and the plains of Orne, we only meet one or two solitary pedestrians. We are nearly as much alone as in a Swiss pass; the scenery might be part of the Tête Noire, and the *Hôtel de la Poste*, at Mortain, which is built on the side of a hill over a ravine, and at which our diligence makes a dead stop, might, for many reasons, be a posada on the Italian Alps.

If we stroll out at once, before the evening closes, we shall have time to visit the cemetery on the rocks, to see the remains of a castle of the Norman dukes, and above all, the superb panorama from the heights; and we may wander afterwards into the valleys to see the cascades, the ivy-covered rocks, and the masses of ferns; scenes so exquisite and varied that we are lost in wonder that all these things are to be seen in France at

small trouble and cost, and that French artists have hardly ever told us of them.[1]

That 'the country round Mortain is not known as well as it deserves,' is a remark that cannot be too often repeated; we cannot, indeed, imagine a more delightful district for an English artist in which to spend a summer, and we promise him that he shall find subjects that will look as well on the walls of the Academy as the Welsh hills, or the valleys of Switzerland.

We are at a loss to express in words the romantic beauty of the situation of Mortain, where we may pitch our tent, and make studies of rocks, which will tell us more in practice, than

[1] French artists flock together in the valleys of the Seine and the Somme, like English landscape painters at the junction of the Greta and the Tees—Mortain and Vire not being yet fashionable. It is hard, indeed, to get English artists out of a groove; to those who, like ourselves, have had to examine the pictures at our annual Exhibitions, year by year, somewhat closely, the streams in Wales are as familiar on canvas, as 'Finding the Body of Harold.'

written volumes about these wondrous geological formations; and the clusters of ivy in the niches, the moss and lichen, the rich colour of the boulders, the trees in the valleys below us, the clear sky, and the sweet air that comes across the bay, make us linger here for the beauty of the scene alone; regardless almost of the ancient history of Mortain, of the story of its Pagan temples, of its thirteenth-century church, and almost unmindful of the 'Abbaye de Savigny,' eight miles off, a building which is worthy of a special visit.

And we come away, perforce, in the evening-time from all this lovely landscape, from the pure air, from the cascades, the rocks, and the ferns, from everything agreeable to the senses, to the most literal, shameful, wallowing in the mire. We have spoken, so far, only of the scene; let add a word in very truth, about 'man and his dwelling-place.' How shall we describe it? We are at the *Hôtel de la Poste*, and we are housed

like pigs; we (some of us) eat like them, and live even as the lower animals. We—'*Messieurs et Mesdames*,' lords and ladies of the creation—hide our heads in a kennel; our dirty rooms 'give' on to the odorous court-yard; we turn our backs upon the valley which the building almost overhangs; we can neither breathe pure air nor see the bright landscape. Any details of the domestic arrangements and surroundings of the *Hôtel de la Poste* at Mortain would be unfit for these pages; suffice it that, we are in one of the second-rate old-fashioned inns of France, the style of which our travelled forefathers may well remember.[1]

We have more than once been censured for saying that the French people have little natural love for scenery, and a stilted, not to say morbid, theory of landscape; but whilst we stay in this inn, from which we might have had such splendid

[1] We speak of Mortain as we found it a few years ago; its sanitory arrangements have, we understand, been improved, but people are not yet enthusiastic about Mortain as a residence.

views, we become confirmed in the opinion (formed in the Pyrenees), that the French people *do not care*, and that they think nothing of defiling Nature's purest places. At this hotel we are in the position of the prisoners confined aloft in the tower at Florence; the hills and valleys are before and around us, but we are not allowed to see them.[1]

On our road to VIRE, twenty-three miles distant, it is tempting to make a digression to the town of Domfront (which the reader will see on the map, a few miles to the south-east); we should do so, to see its picturesque position, with the ancient castle on the heights, and the town, as at Falaise, growing round its feet; also an old church at the foot of the hill, which is con-

[1] Notwithstanding this apparent indifference to landscape, we remember finding at a country inn, the walls covered with one of Troyon's pictures (a hundred times repeated in paper-hanging); a pretty pastoral scene which Messrs. Christie would have catalogued as 'a landscape with cattle.'

sidered 'one of the best and purest specimens of Norman work to be found anywhere.'

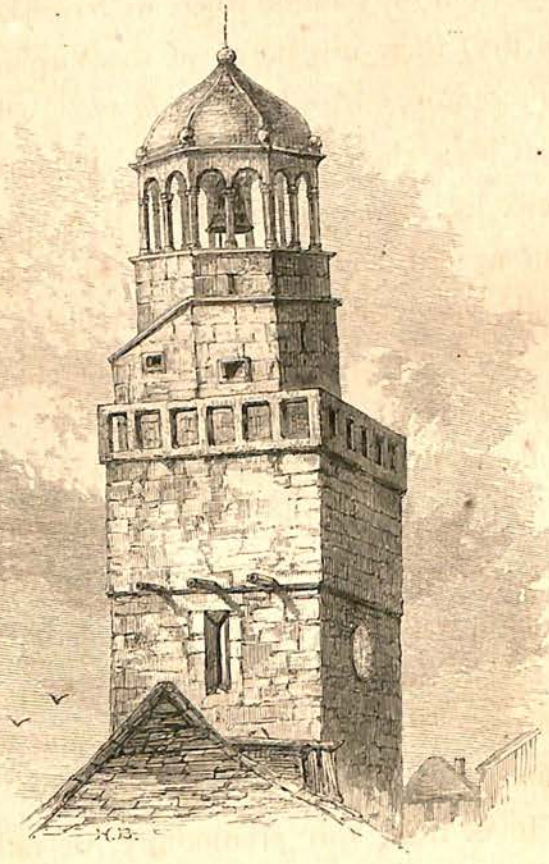
But the route we have chosen for description, now turns northward, passing through a still beautiful land, studded with thatched cottages, and lighted up with the dazzling white helmets of the women who are busy in the fields, and in the farms and homesteads. As we approach the town of Vire, the population has evidently been absorbed into the cloth and paper mills, for, excepting in the morning and the evening, there are very few people abroad; we see scarcely any one, save, at regular intervals on the road, the old cantonniers occupied in their business of making stone-pies,[1] or a village curé at

[1] The neatness and precision with which they make their piles of stones at the road-side will be remembered by many a traveller in this part of Normandy. They accomplish it by putting the stones into a shape (as if making a jelly), and removing the boards when full; and, as there are no French boys, the loose pile remains undisturbed for months.

work in his garden; but we notice that the houses are neater and better built than those near Mortain, where grass grows luxuriantly upon them, and the roofs are covered with coloured mosses.

The situation of Vire is one of extreme beauty (reminding us again of Switzerland), with hills and valleys richly wooded, the trees being larger than any we have yet seen on our route. If we had approached Vire from the west, by way of Villedieu and St. Sever, we should have had even finer views than by way of Mortain; but Villedieu is at present more deplorable than Mortain in its domestic arrangements, and the inn is to be avoided by all cleanly people; however, with the completion of the railway from Vire to Granville, we are promised much better things.

The chief architectural object of interest at Vire is the old clock-tower of the thirteenth century, over the Rue de Calvados, with its high gateway, formerly called 'the gate of the Champ



CLOCK TOWER AT VIRE

de Vire.' Over this gateway (which we cannot see from the position where we have sketched the belfry) there is a statue of the Virgin, with the inscription, '*Marie protége la ville.*' This tower has been altered and repaired at several periods, and, like two others near it, is too much built up against and crowded by, what the French call '*maisons vulgaires*,' to be well seen.

We have not spoken of the castle first, because there is little of it left besides the keep; and the part that remains seems no longer old. The bold promontory on which it stood is now neatly kept and 'tidied' with smooth slopes, straight walks, and double rows of trees, pleasant to walk upon, but more suggestive of the Bois de Boulogne than the approach to a ruin.

It is from this promontory, or rather from what Murray calls 'this dusty pleasure ground,' that we obtain our best view of the country westward, towards Avranches; and from whence we

can see the bold granite formation of the rocks in the neighbourhood. We may see where the manufacturers of cloth and paper have established their mills; and also where, in some cases, they have had to widen out the valleys, and to cut roads through the rocks to their works. All the streams turn waterwheels, and many of the surrounding rocks are disfigured with cloth 'tenters.'

There are some curious half-timbered houses at Vire, and some old streets tempting to sketch; including the house of Basselin, the famous originator of 'vaux de Vire'—or, as they are now called, *vaudevilles.*

The inhabitants number about 9000, they are for the most part engaged in the manufactories of the place, too busy apparently to modernise either their costume or their dwellings; but the railway is now bringing others to the town who will work these changes for them. Happily for them and for us, the hills are of granite and

their sides most precipitous, and the innovators make slow progress in modernisation. At the hotels everyone drinks cider, rather than *vin ordinaire;* and at night we are awoke with the clatter of sabots and the voice of the watchman.

The ancient town of FALAISE, to which so many Englishmen make a pilgrimage, as being the reputed birthplace of William the Conqueror, can now be reached, either from Caen, Vire, or Paris, by railway; but we who come from the west, will do well to keep to the old road; and (if we wish to preserve within us any of the associations connected with the place) should not have the sound of '*Falaise*' first rung in our ears by railway porters. Both the town and castle of Falaise are situated on high ground; and the latter, being on the side of a precipitous eminence, may be seen for a long distance before we approach it by the road. At Falaise, as at Lisieux, the traveller who arrives in the town by railway, is generally surprised and

disappointed, at first sight, with its modern aspect.

'The castle of Falaise,' says M. Leduc, 'consists of a large square Norman keep of the tenth and eleventh centuries, standing at the steepest and highest part of a rocky eminence, with a lofty and exceedingly fine *circular* tower, connected with it on the south-west by a passage; and round the whole, a long irregular line of outer wall following the sinuosities of the hill, fortified by circular towers and enclosing various detached buildings used by the garrison. This line of outer wall and the circular tower is of much later date than the keep, and the greater portion of them is not older than the fourteenth or fifteenth century, when the castle had to withstand attacks from the English. In the keep (it is said) William the Conqueror was born, and they pretend to show the remains of the very room where this event took place, as well as the identical window from which his father "Duke

Robert the Magnificent," first saw Arlette, the daughter of the Falaise tanner.'

Here, under the shadow of 'Talbot's tower,' we might prefer to muse historically, and gather up our memories of facts connected with the place; but we are treading again upon 'the footsteps of the Conqueror,' and must pay for our indiscretion. From the moment we approach the precincts of the castle, we are pounced upon by the inevitable spider (in this instance, in the shape of a very rough and ignorant custodian) who is in hiding to receive his prey. Before we have time for remonstrance, we have paid our money, we have ascended the smooth round tower (one hundred feet high, with walls fifteen feet thick) by a winding staircase, we have been taken out on to the modern zinc-covered roof, and shown the view therefrom; and the spots where the various sieges and battles took place, including the breach made by Henry IV. after seven days' cannonade, a breach that two

or three shots from an Armstrong gun would have effected in these days.

We are shewn, of course, 'the room where William the Conqueror was born,' and from the windows of the castle keep we have just time to make a sketch of the beautiful Val d'Ante,[1] and of the women, with their curiously-shaped baskets, washing in the stream; and to listen to the thrice-told tale of the tanner's daughter, and to the deeds of valour wrought on these heights —when the performance is declared to be over, and we find ourselves once more on the ramparts outside the castle.

We are so full of historical associations at Falaise—every nook and corner of the castle telling of its nine sieges—that we are glad to

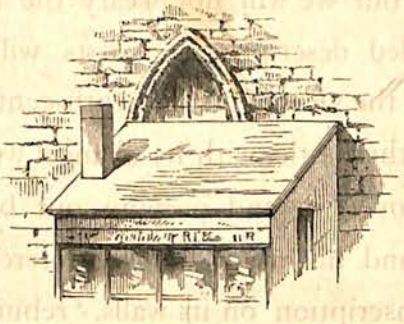
[1] Submitting to the exigencies of publishing expediency, we have been unable to have this drawing reproduced on wood; although we were anxious to draw attention to the bold forms of rocks which crown these heights, and to the fine old trees which surround the castle.

be able to examine the building thoroughly from without, and to remind ourselves of the method of defensive warfare in the fifteenth century. The whole of the precincts of the castle, the walls, ramparts, and the principal towers, are (at the time we write, August, 1869) strewn with mason's work, as if a new castle of Falaise were being built; everything looks fresh and new, it is only here and there we discover anything old, the remnants of a carved window, and the like. But, as a Frenchman observed to us, if it had not been for all this nineteenth-century work, the present generation would never have seen the castle of Falaise. The work of restoration appears to be carried on in rather a different spirit from the ecclesiastical restorations at Caen and Bayeux; here the prevailing idea seems to be, 'prop up your antique *any how*' (with timber beams, and a zinc roof to Talbot's tower, such as we might put over a cistern), so long as devotees will come and worship, with francs,

at the shrine; whilst at Bayeux, as we have seen, the old work is handled with reverence and fear, and the nineteenth-century mason puts out all his power to imitate, if not to excel, the work of the twelfth.

The churches at Falaise should not pass unnoticed; but we will not weary the reader with any detailed description. Artists will especially delight in the view of a fourteenth-century church close to the castle, with its chancel with creepers growing over it, and peeping out between the stones; and historians will be interested in the laconic inscription on its walls, 'rebuilt in 1438, a year of war, death, plague, and famine.' If such artists as Brewer, or Burgess, would only come here and give us drawings of these streets (of one especially, taking in the cathedral at the end, with its stone walls built over by shops, as at Pont Audemer), they would be very interesting to Englishmen. Antiquaries will regret to learn that in the year 1869, the west end of a

church is obliterated, as in the next illustration; that the shop of one 'M. Guille, peruquier,' reposes against the window, and that two other, quite modern, buildings lean against its walls. An old Norman arch is carved immediately above the window we have sketched, and completes the picture.



It is, of course, not very easy to sketch undisturbed in the streets of Falaise; and both in the churches and in the castle the showman is perpetually treading on the traveller's heels. Everywhere we turn, in the neighbourhood of the castle, we are reminded of historic deeds of valour, and of deadly fights in the middle ages; and every day that we remain in the town, we

are reminded (by the crowds of farmers, horse-dealers, and others, who are busy at the great fair held here twice a year) of our own, by comparison, very trifling business at Falaise. We are making a drawing of the great rocks near the castle, and of the valley below, every step of which is made famous by the memory of the Conqueror; when our studies are disturbed, not by tourists but by natives of the town; once by a farmer to see his good horses, which indeed he had, at the stables at the 'hotel of the beautiful Star,' where there were at least fifty standing for sale; and once, by a small boy, who carries a tray full of little yellow books called '*La Lanterne de Falaise*,' with a picture on the cover of the castle tower, and a huge lantern slung from the battlements! We purchase a copy, to get rid of the last intruder, and find it to be a '*Revue, satirique et humouristique*,' treating of divers matters, including '*faits atroces et chiens perdus*'!

Now without being accused of misanthropy, we may remark that there are times and places when an Englishman would rather be 'let alone,' and that the precincts of Falaise are certainly of them. These century-wide contrasts and concussions, jar so terribly sometimes, that we are half-inclined to ask with M. de Tocqueville, whether we do not seem to be on the eve of a new Byzantine era, in which 'little men shall discuss and ape the deeds which great men did in their forefathers' days.'[1] The refrain in this nineteenth century is, 'still the showman, still the spectator,' until we become almost tired of the song. 'Here some noble act was achieved—there some valiant man perished.' Every nook and corner of the place

[1] There are 'deeds of valour' (according to the *affiches*) to be witnessed in these days at Falaise; we once saw a woman here, in a circus, turning somersaults on horseback before a crowd of spectators. The people of Falaise cannot be accused of being behind the age; one gentleman advertises as his *specialité*, 'the cure of injuries caused by velocipedes'!

tells the same story; until we are tempted to enquire 'What are *we* doing (or are fit and capable of doing personally, on an emergency, in the matter of fighting,) to compare with the achievements of these Norman men of all ranks of life?'

But not only in Normandy, it is the same wherever we go: as far as our own personal part in heroic actions is concerned, we live in an atmosphere of unreality; we read of great deeds rather than achieve them, we make shows of the works of our ancestors, we take pence (readily) over the graves of our kinsmen, and live, as it seems to us, rather unworthily, in the past.

With our nineteenth-century inventions, we could, it is true, mow down these castle heights in half an hour, and we might well be proud of the achievement as a nation; but our warfare is at best but poor mercenary work, the heart of the nation—the life and courage of its people—are not

in it.[1] We civilians, are too much protected, and most of us do not know how to fight. Like the Athenians, we are supposed to be cultivating the arts of peace, but, as we endeavoured to show at Caen, if judged by our monuments, we are making no great mark in our generation. Perhaps this is a question rather wide of our subject, but let us at least contend for one thing, viz.:— that if the mission of the present generation is not to wield battle-axes, but rather to fight social battles, say for the amelioration of the unhappy part of the population; and if it is our fortune to be protected the while, by a staff of policemen, and by strong laws against crime—that we should not neglect, at the same time, to cultivate and preserve the personal valour that is in us, by the

[1] Our peaceful proclivities may be noticed in small things; the fierce and warlike devices, such as an eagle's head, a lion *rampant*, and the like, which were originally designed to stimulate the warrior in battle, now serve to adorn the panel of a carriage, or a sheet of note-paper.

use of arms. It may be that the day is shortly coming (our engineers predict that we shall soon have hand-to-hand fighting again), when every individual amongst us will have to put his courage to the proof; and if this should ever happen, it will certainly not diminish our interest in the construction and arrangement of these mediæval castles, or in the battles that have been fought beneath their walls.

CHAPTER IX.

ROUEN.

AT a corner of the market-place at Rouen, there stood, but a few years ago, one of the most picturesque houses in all Normandy, and with a story (if we are to believe the old chroniclers) as pathetic as any in history.

It was from a door in this house that, in the year 1431, the unfortunate Joan of Arc was led out to be 'burned as a sorceress' before the people of Rouen. We need not dwell upon the story of the 'fair maid of Orleans,' which every child has by heart, but (mindful of our picturesque mission) we should like to carry the reader in imagination

to the same spot just four hundred years later, when an English artist, heedless of the crowd that collects around him, sits down in the street to sketch the lines of the old building, already tottering to ruin. Faithfully and patiently does the artist draw the old gables, the unused doorway, the heavy awnings, the piles of wood, the market-women, and the grey perspective of the side street with its pointed roofs, curious archways and oil lantern swinging from house to house; and as faithfully (even to the mis-spelling of the word 'liquer,' on a board over the doorway) almost indeed, with the touch of the artist's pencil, has the engraver reproduced, by means of photography, the late Samuel Prout's drawing on the frontispiece of this volume.[1]

[1] It is rather a curious fact that Prout, notwithstanding his love for historic scenes, seems to have had little sympathy with the poor 'Maid of Orleans.' In a letter which accompanied the presentation of this drawing, the following passage occurs:—'I beg your acceptance of what is miserable, though perhaps not uninteresting, as it is

Few artists have succeeded, as Prout succeeded, in giving the character of the old buildings in Normandy, and certainly no other drawings with which we are acquainted, admit of being photographed as his do, without losing effect. It is scarcely too much to say that in this engraving we can distinguish the different washes of colour, the greys and warmer tints, the broad touches of his pencil on the white caps of the women, and the very work of his hand in the bold, decisive shadows.

It is pleasant to dwell for a moment on Prout's work, for he has become identified with Normandy through numerous sketches of buildings now pulled down; and they have an anti-

---

part of the house in which Joan of Arc was confined at Rouen, and before which the English, *very wisely*, burnt her for a witch!'

Mr. Prout evidently differed in opinion from Pierre Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais, who presided at the tribunal which condemned Joan of Arc to death; for he founded a Lady Chapel at Lisieux, 'in expiation of his false judgment of an innocent woman.'

quarian as well as an artistic interest. They are 'mannered,' as we all know, but they have more *couleur locale* than any of the drawings of Pugin; and are valued (we speak of money value) at the present time, above the works of most water-colour painters of his time.

But we must not dream about old Rouen, we must rather tell the reader what it is like to-day, and how modern and prosaic is its aspect; how we arrive by express train, and are rattled through wide paved streets in an '*omnibus du Chemin de Fer*,' and are set down at a 'grand' hotel, where we find an Englishman seated in the doorway reading 'Bell's Life.'

Rouen is busy and thriving, and has a fixed population of not less than 150,000; situated about half-way between Paris and the port of Havre, there is a constant flow of traffic passing and repassing, and its quays are lined with goods for exportation. In front of our window at the Hôtel d'Angleterre, from which we have a

view for miles on both sides of the Seine, the noise and bustle are almost as great as at Lyons or Marseilles. The Rouen of to-day is given up to commerce, to the swinging of cranes, and to the screeching of locomotives on the quays; whilst the fine broad streets and lines of newly erected houses, shut out from our view the old city of which we have heard so much, and which many of us have come so far to see. As we approach Rouen by the river, or even by railway, it is true that we see cathedral towers, but they are interspersed with smoking factory chimneys and suspension bridges; and although on our first drive through the town, we pass the magnificent portal of the cathedral and the old clock-tower in the '*rue de la Grosse Horloge*,' we observe that the cathedral has a cast-iron spire, and that the frescoes and carving round the clock-tower are built up against and pasted over with bills of concerts and theatres.

The streets are full of busy merchants, trim shopkeepers, and the usual crowd of blouses that we see in every city in France. There are wide boulevards and trees round Rouen; and if we look down upon the city from the heights of Mont St. Catherine (perhaps the best view that we can obtain anywhere) it may remind us, with its broad river laden with ships and its cathedral towers, of the superb view of Lyons that we obtain from the heights near the cemetery: the view so well known to visitors to that city. The people of Rouen who have spread out into the enormous suburb of St. Sever, on the left bank of the Seine,[1] are busy by thousands in the manufactories,—the sound of the loom and the anvil comes up to us even here; and down

[1] It is curious to note that the wealth of cities nearly always flow westward,—converting, as in London, the market-gardens of the poor into the 'Palace Gardens' of the rich; and, with steady advance, sweeps away our landmarks,—turning the gravel pits of western London into the decorum of a Ladbroke-square.

by the banks of the river, away westward, as far as the eye can see, up spring clean bright houses of the wealthy manufacturers and traders of Rouen,—rich, sleek, and portly gentlemen with the thinnest boots, who never even pass down the old streets if they can help it, but whom we shall find very pleasant and hospitable; and with whom we may sit down at a café under the trees and play at dominoes in the open street, in the middle of the day, without creating a scandal.

But if Rouen will not compare with Lyons in size, or commercial importance, it surpasses it in antiquarian interest; and we have chosen our illustrations to depict it rather as it was, than as it is. We give a drawing of Joan of Arc's house rather than of a building in the 'rue Imperiale;' and a view of the old market-place in front of the cathedral rather than of the trim toy-garden at the west end of the church of St. Ouen; and we do this, not only because it

is more picturesque, but because the modern aspect of Rouen is familiar to the majority of our readers.

But we must examine the old buildings whilst there is time, for (as in other towns of Normandy) the work of demolition grows fast and furious; and the churches, the *Palais de Justice*, the courts of law, and the tower of the *Grosse Horloge* will soon be all that is left to us. The narrow winding streets of gable-ended houses, with their strange histories, will soon be forgotten by all but the antiquary; for there is a ruthless law that no more half-timbered houses shall be built, and another that everything shall be in line.

We are surrounded by old houses, but cannot easily find them, and when discovered they almost crumble at the touch—they fade away as if by magic; and there is a halo of mystery, we might almost say of sanctity, about them which is indescribable; it is as if the blossoms of an early age

still clung to the old walls and garlanded with time-wreaths their tottering ruins.

Rouen is disappearing like a dissolving view—a few more slides in the magic lantern, a few more windows of plate-glass, a few more '*grandes rues*' and the picture of old Rouen fades away.

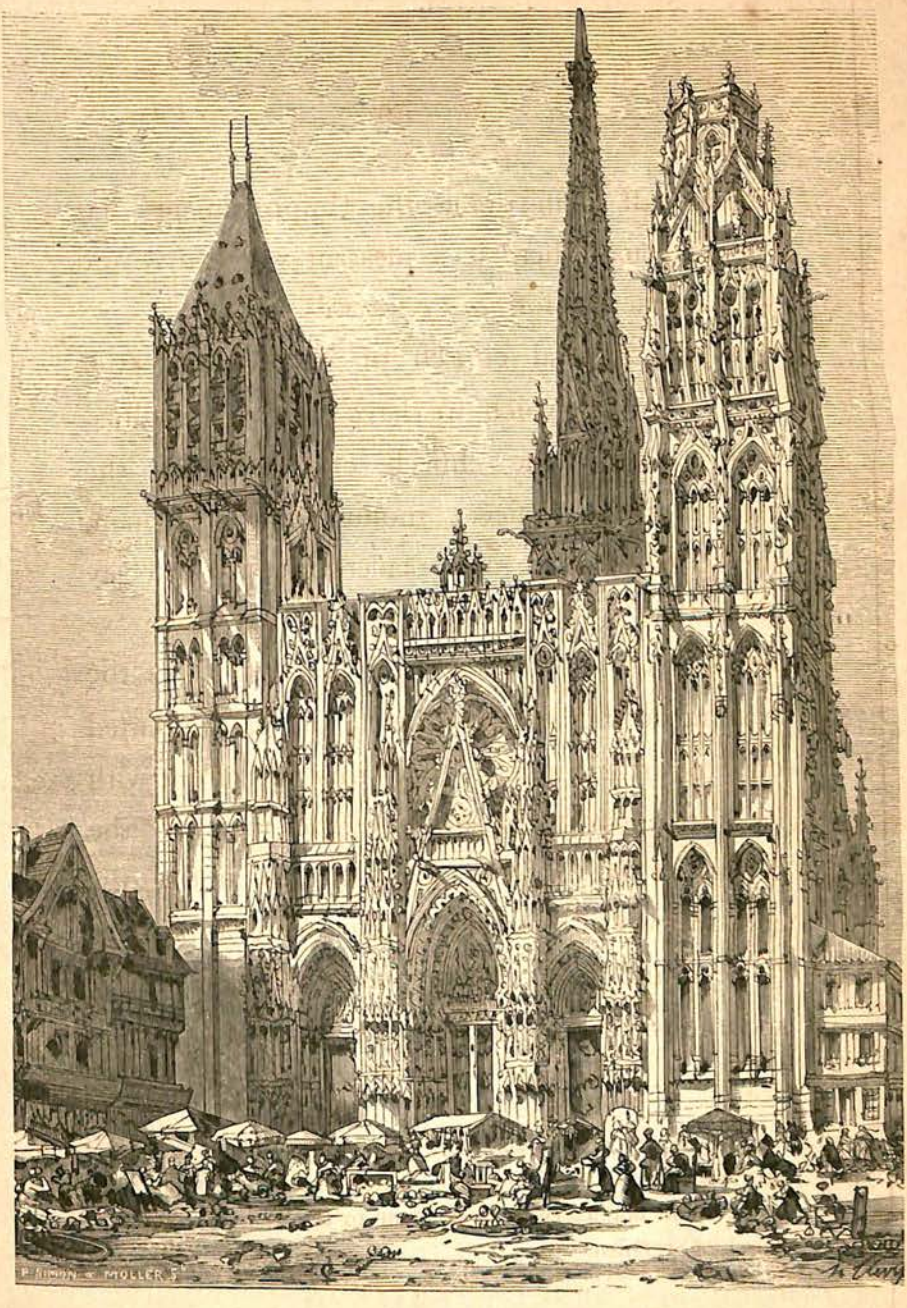
Let us hasten to the *Place de la Pucelle*, and examine the carving on the houses, and on the *Hôtel Bourgthéroude*, before the great Parisian conjuror waves his wand once more. But, hey presto! down they come, in a street hard by—even whilst we write, a great panel totters to the ground—heraldic shields, with a border of flowers and pomegranates, carved in oak; clusters of grapes and diaper patterns of rich design, emblems of old nobility—all in the dust; a hatchment half defaced, a dragon with the gold still about his collar, a bit of an eagle's wing, a halberd snapped in twain—all piled together in a heap of ruin!

A few weeks only, and we pass the place

again—all is in order, the 'improvement' has taken place; there is a pleasant wide *pavé*, and a manufactory for '*eau gazeuse*.'

The cathedral church of Nôtre Dame (the west front of which we have seen in the illustration), and the church of St. Ouen, the two most magnificent monuments in Rouen, are so familiar to most readers that we can say little that is new respecting them. When we have given a short description, taken from the best authorities on the subject, and have pointed out to artistic readers that this west front with its surrounding houses, and the view of the towers of St. Ouen from the garden, at the *east* end, are two of the grandest architectural pictures to be found in Normandy, we shall have nearly accomplished our task.[1]

[1] It is no new remark that more than one Englishman of artistic taste has returned to Rouen after visiting the buildings of Paris, having found nothing equal in grandeur to this cathedral, and the church of St. Ouen.



CATHEDRAL OF 'NOTRE DAME' AT ROUEN.

"Like a piece of rockwork, rough and encrusted with images, and ornamented from top to bottom."

'The cathedral of Nôtre Dame occupies with its west front one side of a square, formerly a fruit and flower market. The vast proportions of this grand Gothic façade, its elaborate and profuse decorations, and its stone screens of open tracery, impress one at first with wonder and admiration, diminished however but not destroyed, by a closer examination; which shows a confusion of ornament and a certain corruption of taste.

'The projecting central porch, and the whole of the upper part, is of the sixteenth century, the lateral ones being of an earlier period and chaster in style. Above the central door is carved the genealogy of Jesse; over the north-west door is the death of John the Baptist, with the daughter of Herodias dancing before Herod; and above them, figures of Virgin and Saints.

'The north tower, called St. Romain (the one on the left in our illustration), is older in date, part of it being of the twelfth century; the right-hand tower, which is more florid, being of the

sixteenth.' The central spire in the background is really of *cast iron*, and stands out, it is fair to say, much more sharply and painfully against the sky, than in our illustration.[1] We must not omit to mention the beautiful north door, called the 'Portail des Libraires,' which in Prout's time was completely blocked up with old houses and wooden erections.

'On entering the doorway of the north porch (says *Cassell*), the visitor will be struck with the size, loftiness, and rich colour of the interior, 435 feet long and 89 feet high. The 'clerestory' of the sixteenth century is full of painted glass. On each side of the nave there is a series of chapels, constructed in the fourteenth century, between the buttresses of the main walls; they are full of very fine stained glass, and contain good pictures and monuments. The transepts are remarkable

[1] The original spire was made of wood, and much more picturesque; our artist evidently could not bring himself to copy with literal truth this disfiguring element in the building.

for their magnificent rose-windows, and in the north transept there is a staircase of open-tracery work of exquisite workmanship.

'The choir, separated from the nave by a modern Grecian screen, was built in the thirteenth century, the carving of the stalls is extremely curious. The elaborately carved screen in front of the sacristy was executed in the latter part of the fifteenth century, and its wrought-iron door must not be passed unnoticed.'[1]

The Church of St. Ouen 'surpasses the cathedral in size, purity of style, masterly execution, and splendid, but judicious decoration, and is inferior only in its historic monuments. It is one of the noblest and most perfect Gothic edifices in the world.' Thus it has been described again and

[1] For a detailed description of the monuments in this Cathedral, and of the church of St. Ouen, we cannot do better than refer the reader to the very accurate account in Murray's 'Handbook;' and also to Cæsell's 'Normandy,' from which we have made the above extracts.

again; suffice it for us to mention a few details of its construction. It is said that the abbey of St. Ouen was orginally built in 533, in the reign of Clothaire I., and then dedicated to St. Peter. Through various changes of construction and destruction, it holds a prominent part in the history of the time of the Conqueror and the Dukes of Normandy; and it was not for a thousand years after its foundation that the present building was completed. 'During the troubles of the times of the Huguenots in the sixteenth century, it suffered greatly, especially in 1562, when the fanatics lighted bonfires inside, and burnt the organ, stalls, pulpit, and vestments.' Again at the end of the eighteenth century, 'the building was exposed to the fury of the Revolutionists, when it was used as a manufactory of arms; a forge being erected within it and the painted windows so blackened as to become indecipherable; and later still, 'in the time of Napoleon I., a project was laid before him, by

the municipality of Rouen, for destroying the church altogether!'

Perhaps there is no monument that we could point to in Europe which has a more eventful history, or which, after a lapse of thirteen hundred years, presents to the spectator, in the year 1869, a grander spectacle. If we walk in the public gardens that surround it, and see its towers, from different points, through the trees, or, better still, ascend one of the towers and look down on its pinnacles, we shall never lose the memory of St. Ouen. The beautiful proportions of its octagon tower, terminating with a crown of *fleurs de lis*, has well been called a 'model of grace and beauty;' whilst its interior, 443 feet long and 83 feet wide, unobstructed from one end to the other, with its light, graceful pillars, and the coloured light shed through the painted windows, have as fine an effect as that of any church in France; not excepting the cathedrals of Amiens and Chartres.

We should not omit to mention the beautiful church of St. Maclou at Rouen, and several others that are being preserved and restored with the utmost care. The great delights of this city are its ecclesiastical monuments; for if Rouen has become of late years (as in fact it has) a busy, modern town; if its old houses and streets are being swept away, its churches and monuments remain. And if, as we have said, the inhabitants are prone to imitate many English habits and customs, there is one custom of ours that they do not imitate—they do not 'religiously' close nearly every church in the land for six days out of the seven; their places of worship are not shut up like dungeons, they are open to the breath of life, and partake of the atmosphere of the 'work-a-day' world.[1] In England we dust out our earthy little chapels on Saturdays, and

[1] We must record an exception to this rule, in the case of the church at Dives, which is kept closely locked, under the care of an old woman.

we complete the process with silken trains on Sundays; we worship in an atmosphere more fit for the dead than the living, and in a few hours shut up the buildings again to the spiders and the flies!

We have little more to say to the reader about the churches in Normandy, and we should like to leave him best at the south-west corner of the square in front of the Cathedral (close to the spot from which M. Clerget has made his drawing), where he may take away with him an impression of the wealth and grandeur of the architecture of Normandy, pleasant to dwell upon.

If we do not examine too closely into 'principles,' or trouble our minds too much with 'styles' of architecture, the effect that we obtain here will be completely and artistically beautiful, and satisfying to the eye. It is not easy to point out any modern building that fulfils these conditions; where, for instance, can we see anything like the work that was bestowed on the lower

portion of this façade? We may spend more money and effort, but we do not achieve anything which seems to the spectator more spontaneously beautiful (if we use the word aright); anything displaying more wealth of decoration, combined with grandeur of effect. Severe, we might say austere, critics speak of the 'confusion of ornament,' and tell us that the over-elaboration of carving on the exterior of this cathedral is a sign of decadence, and that the principles on which the architects of Caen and Bayeux worked were more noble and worthy; whilst architects will tell us that Gothic art was generally 'debased' at Rouen,—debased from the time when people gave themselves up to the luxury of the Renaissance; and 'pride took the place of enthusiasm and faith, in art.'

We might, indeed, if we chose to make the comparison for a moment between Christian and Mahommedan art, see a higher principle at work in the construction of the mosques and palaces

of the Moors, where simplicity, refinement, and truth are noticeable in every line; we might see it in mauresque work, in the absence of grotesque images, or the imitation of living things in ornament; but, above all, in the severe simplicity and grandeur of their *exteriors*, and in the decoration, colour, and gilding of their interior courts alone,—carrying out, in short, the true meaning of the words that, the king's daughter should be—'all glorious within, her clothing of wrought gold.'

On one Sunday morning at Rouen we go with 'all the world' to be present at a musical mass at the cathedral, and to hear another great preacher from Paris. It was a grander performance than the one we attended at Caen; but the sermon was less eloquent, less refined, and was remarkable in quite a different way. It was a discourse, holding up to his hearers, as far as we could follow the rapid flow of his eloquence, the delight and glory

of 'doing battle for Right'—of fighting (to use the common phrase) the 'fight of Faith.'

But he was preaching to a congregation of shopkeepers, traders, and artisans, and his appeal to arms seemed to fall flatly on the trading mind; whilst the old incongruity between the building and the dress of the nineteenth century, was as remarkable as it is in Westminster Abbey; and the contrast between the unchivalrous aspect of the speaker, and the tone of his language, was more striking still.[1]

What priest or curé, in these days, stands forth

[1] Just as the words of our Baptismal service, enrolling a young child into the 'church militant,' lose half their effect when addressed to men whose ideas of manliness and fighting fall very short of their true meaning.

It has a strange sound (to say the least that could be said) to hear quiet town-bred godfathers promise that they will 'take care' that a child shall 'fight under the banner' of the cross, and 'continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end;' and it is almost as strange to hear the good Bishop Heber's warlike imagery —'His blood-red banner streams afar; who follows in his train?' &c., &c.—in the mouths of little children.

in his presence or influence, as the ideal champion of a romantic faith, the cerèmonials of which seem more and more alienated from the spirit of the nineteenth century—at least in the north of Europe, where colour, imagination, and passion have less influence? What real sympathy has the kind, fat, fatherly figure before us with soldiers, saints, or martyrs?[1]

He preached for nearly an hour, with frequent pauses and strange changes in the inflexion of the voice. We will not attempt a repetition of his arguments, but must record one sentence in an extempore sermon of great versatility and power; a sentence that, if we understood it aright, was singularly liberal and broad in view. Speaking of the rivalry that existed between the different

[1] The incongruity strikes one more when we see him afterwards in the town, marching along with a flat-footed shambling tread, holding an umbrella in front of him in his clenched fist (as all french priests hold it),—a figure as unromantic-looking as ungraceful.

sects of Christians, and making pointed allusion to the colony of protestant Huguenots established at Beuzeval on the seashore, he ended with the words, 'Better than all this rivalry and strife (far better than the common result amongst men, indifference) that, like ships becalmed at sea,—when a religious breeze stirs our hearts—we should raise aloft our fair white sails and come sailing into port together, lowering them in the haven of the one true church.'

He made a pause several times in his discourse, during which he looked about him, and mopped his head with his handkerchief, and behaved, for the moment, much more as if he were in his dressing-room than in a public pulpit; but he held his audience with magic sway, his influence over the people was wonderful—wonderful to us when we listened to his imagery, and to the means used to stir their hearts.[1]

[1] He could not be called naturally gifted, even in the matter of

In the picturesque and moving times of the middle ages it must surely have needed less forcing and fewer formulæ to 'lift up the hearts of the people to the Queen of Heaven;' if it were only in the likeness of the black doll, which they worship at Chartres to this day. But until we realise to ourselves more completely the lives of warriors in mediæval days, we shall never understand how chivalry and the worship of beauty entered into their hearts and lives, and was to them the highest and noblest of virtues; nor shall we comprehend their ready acceptance of the adoration of the Virgin as the one true religion.

In such a building as the cathedral at Rouen, it is impossible to forget the people who once trod its pavement; memories that not all the modern paraphernalia and glitter can obliterate.

speaking; but he had been well taught from his youth up, both the manner and the method of fixing the attention of his hearers.

If we visit the cathedral after vespers, when the candles in the Lady-chapel look like glowworm-lights through the dark aisles, we are soon carried back in imagination to mediæval days. The floor of the nave is covered with kneeling figures of warriors, each with a red cross on his breast; the pavement resounds to the clash of arms; there is a low chorus of voices in prayer, a sound of stringed instruments, a silence—and then, an army of men rise up and march to war. There is a pause of six hundred years, and another procession passes through these aisles; the pavement resounds to less martial footsteps,—they are not warriors, they are 'Cook's excursionists'!

Let us now leave the cathedral, and see something more of the town.

It is a fine summer's afternoon, in the middle of the week, the air is soft and quiet; the busy population of Rouen seem, with one consent, to rest from labour, and the Goddess of Leisure tells

her beads. One, two (decrepit old men); three, four, five (nurses and children); six, seven, eight (Chasseurs de Vincennes or a 'noble Zouave),' and so on, until the Rosary is complete and there are no more seats.[1] Every day under our windows they come and wedge themselves close together on the long stone seats under the dusty trees, to rest; and thread themselves in rows one by one, as if some unseen hand were telling, with human beads, the mystery of the Rosary.

Why do we speak of what is done every day in every city of France? Because it is worth a moment's notice, that in the day-time of busy cities men can, if they choose, find time to rest. There are gardens open, and seats provided in the middle of the cities, so that the poor children need not play on dustheaps and under

[1] On the quay at the front of the Hôtel d'Angleterre, the public seats under the trees are crowded with people in the afternoon, especially of the poor and working classes.

carriage-wheels. There is a small open square in the heart of Rouen, laid out with rocks and trees, and a waterfall, which we should dearly like to shew to certain 'parish guardians.'

The modern business-like aspect of Rouen communicates itself even to religious matters, and before we have been here long, we think nothing of seeing piles of crucifixes, and 'Virgins and children', put out in the street in boxes for sale, at a 'fabrique d'ornaments de l'église.' We, the people of Rouen, do a great business in *chasublerie*, and the like; we drive hard bargains for images of the Saviour in zinc and iron (they are catalogued for us, and placed in rows in the shop windows); we purchase *lachryma Christi* by the dozen; and, for a few sous, may become possessed of the whole paraphernalia of the Holy Manger.

We have been cheated so often at Rouen, that we are inclined to ask the question whether we, English people, really possess a higher working

morality than the French. Are we really more straightforward and honourable than they? Are there bounds which they overstep and which we cannot pass? It has been our pride for centuries to be considered more noble and manly than many of our neighbours; is there any reason to fear that our moral influence is on the wane, in these days of universal interchange of thought, free-trade, and rapid intercommunication?

In the course of our journey through Normandy, we have not said much about modern paintings, but at Rouen we are reminded that there are many French artists hard at work. The most prominent painters are those of the school of Edouard Frère, who depict scenes of cottage life, with the earnestness, if not always with the elevated sentiment of Mason, Walker, and other, younger, English painters. The works of many of these French artists are familiar to us in England, and we need not allude to them further; but there is an exhibition of water-

colour drawings at Rouen, about which we must say a word.[1]

These sketches of towns in Normandy, and of pastoral scenes, have a curious family likeness, and a mannerism which the French may call '*chic*,' but which we are inclined to attribute to want of power and patient study. There is an old-fashioned formality in the composition of their landscapes, which does not seem to our eyes to belong to the world of to-day, and a decidedly amateurish treatment which is surprising. They repeat themselves and each other, without end, and evidently are thinking more about *Beranger* than the places of which he sang; they would seek (as some one expresses it) to 'reconcile literal facts with rapturous harmonies,' in short they attempt too much, and accomplish too little.

[1] There seem to be few living French artists of genius, who devote themselves to landscape painting; when we have mentioned the names of Troyon, Lambinet, Lamorinière and Auguste Bonheur, we have almost exhausted the list.

In form and feature, these pictures remind us (like Rouen itself) of a bygone time, when travelling on the Continent was difficult and expensive, and views of foreign towns were not easy to obtain; when some distinguished amateur (distinguished, perhaps, more for his courage and industry than for his art) visited the Continent at rare intervals, and brought home in triumph a few hazy sketches of a people that we had scarce heard of, and hardly believed in; and had them engraved and multiplied, for the art-loving amongst us, as the best treasures of the time.

The modernised aspect of Rouen is one that we (as lookers-on merely) shall never cease to regret, because it is the town of all others which should tell us most of the past; and it is, moreover, the one town in Normandy which most English people find time to see.

But if most of its individuality and character have vanished, its sanitary condition and its wealth, have, we must admit, improved greatly under the

new regime. 'When I walk through the enormous streets and boulevards of new Paris,' says a well-known writer, 'I feel appalled by the change, but unable to dispute with it mentally, for it bears the imprint of an idea which is becoming dominant over Europe. For the moment the individuality of man as expressed in his dwelling (as in the house in our frontispiece) is gone—suppressed. The human creature no longer builds for himself, decorates for himself; no longer lets loose his fancy, his humour, his notions of the fitting and the comfortable. Science and economy go hand in hand, and lay down his streets and erect his houses.' Thus, although, from an artistic point of view, we shall never be reconciled to the changes that have come over Normandy, we cannot ignore the consequent social advantages. Mr. Ruskin, speaking of the change in Switzerland during his memory of it (thirty-five years) says :—'In that half of the permitted life of man I have seen strange evil brought upon

every scene that I best loved, or tried to make beloved by others. The light which once flushed those pale summits with its rose at dawn and purple at sunset, is now umbered and faint; the air which once inlaid the clefts of all their golden crags with azure, is now defiled with languid coils of smoke, belched from worse than volcanic fires; their very glacier waves are ebbing, and their snows fading, as if hell had breathed on them; the waters that once sunk at their feet into crystalline rest, are now dimmed and foul, from deep to deep, and shore to shore.'

But the clouds of smoke that defile the land, the shrieking of steam, and the perpetual, terrible grinding of iron against iron (sounds which our little children grow up not to heed) are part of a system which enables Mr. Ruskin, one day to address a crowd in the theatre of the British Institution, and on the next—or the next but one—to utter this lament on the banks of Lake Leman. His remarks, with which so many will

sympathise, lose point and consequence from the fact of his own rapid translation from one place to another, and from the advantages *we* gain by his travelling on the wings of steam. And there is a certain consolation in the knowledge that in the days when the waters of Geneva were of 'purest blue,' the accommodation for travellers at the old hostelries was less favourable to peace of mind.

CHAPTER X.

THE VALLEY OF THE SEINE.

IN the fruitful hills that border the river Seine, and form part of the great watershed of Lower Normandy, Nature has poured forth her blessings; and her daughters, who are here lightly sketched, dispense her bounties.

It is a pleasant thing to pass homeward through this 'food-producing' land—to go leisurely from town to town, and see something more of country life in Normandy—to see the laden orchards, the cattle upon the hills, and the sloping fields of corn. It is yet early in the autumn, but the variety of colour spread over the landscape is delightful to the eye; the rich brown of the buckwheat, the bright yellow mustard; the green pastures by rivers, and the poppies in the golden corn; the fields, divided by high hedges, and interspersed with mellowed trees; the orchards raining fruit that glitters in the sunshine as it falls; the purple heath, the luxuriant ferns. There is '*une recolte magnifique*' this year, and the people have but one thought—'the gathering in;' the country presents to us a picture—not like Watteau's '*fêtes galantes*,' but rather that of an English harvest-home.

We are in the midst of the cornfields near Villers-sur-mer, and the hill-side is glorious; it is

covered to the very summit with riches—the heavily-laden corn-stems wave their crests against a blue horizon, whilst, in a cleft of the hill, a long line of poppies winds downwards in one scarlet stream. They are set thickly in some places, and form a blaze of colour, inconceivably, painfully brilliant—a concentration of light as utterly beyond our power of imitation by the pencil, as genius is removed from ordinary minds. We could not paint it if we would, but we may see in it an allegory of plenty, and of peace (of that peace which France so urgently desires); we may see her blood-red banner of war laid down to garland the hill-side with its crimson folds, and her children laying their offerings at the feet of Ceres and forgetting Mars altogether. The national anthem becomes no longer a natural refrain—anything would sound more appropriate than 'partant pour la Syrie' (there is no time for *that* work)—to our little friend in fluttering blouse, who sits in the grass and 'minds' fifty

head of cattle by moral force alone; we should rather sing:—

> 'Little boy blue, come blow me your horn,
> The orchards are laden, the cow's in the corn!'

We cannot leave this pastoral scene, at least until the evening; when the sun goes down behind the sea—leaving a glow upon the hill-side and upon the crowd of gleaners who have just come up, and casts long shadows across the stubble and on the sheaves of corn; when the harvest moon shines out, and the picture is completed — the corn-sheaves lighted on one side by the western glow, on the other by the moon; like the famous shield over which knights did battle,—one side silver, the other gold.

All this time we are within sight, and nearly within sound, of the 'happy hunting grounds' of Trouville and Deauville, but the country people are singularly unaffected by the proximity of those

pretty towns, invented by Dumas and peopled by his following.[1] It is true that on the walls of a little village inn, there is something paraded about a 'Trouville Association, Limited,' and a company for 'the passage of the Simplon,' with twenty-franc shares; but these things do not seem to find much favour amongst the thrifty peasantry. They have, in their time, been tempted to unearth their treasures, and to invest in bubble companies like the rest of the world; but there is a reaction here, the Normans evidently thinking, like the old Colonnæ, that a hole in the bottom of the garden is about the safest place after all. And they have, it is true, some other temptations which come to them with a cheap press, such as '*la sureté financière*,' '*le moniteur des tirages financiers*,' '*le petit moniteur financier*,' &c., newspapers whose special

[1] It is unfortunately different in the case of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood of Fécamp and Étretat, who are certainly not improved, either in manners or morals, by the fashionable invasion of their province.

business it is, to teach the people how to get rid of their savings (we are speaking, of course, of the comparatively uneducated agricultural population—the farmers, all through the district we have come, especially near Vire and Falaise, being rich (*propriétaires* and investing largely; and there are many other things in these half-penny French newspapers which find their way into these remote corners of France, which must make the curé sometimes regret that he had taught his flock to read. In a little paper which lies before us, the first article is entitled '*Le miroir du diable*;' then follows a long account of a poisoning case in Paris, and some songs from a *café chantant*, interspersed with illustrations of the broadest kind. But let us not be too critical; we have seen many things in France which would startle Englishmen, but nothing, we venture to say, more harmful in its tendency, than the weekly broad-sheet of crime which is spread out over our own land (to the number, the proprietors

boast, of at least a hundred thousand),[1] wherein John and Jane, who can only sign their names with a cross, read in hideous cartoons, suggestions of cruelty and crime more revolting than any the schoolmaster could have taught them.

In these rich and prosperous provinces, the people (revolutionary and excitable as their ancestors were) certainly appear happy and contented; the most uneducated of them are quick-witted and ready in reply, they are not boorish or sullen, they have more readiness — at least in manner — than the germanic races, and are, as a rule, full of gaiety and humour. These people do not want war, they hate the conscription which takes away the flower of the flock; they regard with anything but pleasure the rather dictatorial '*Moniteur*' that comes to them by post sometimes, whether they ask

[1] The London 'Illustrated Police News.'

for it or not, and would much rather be 'let alone.'[1]

Such is a picture of Lower Normandy, the land of plenty where we wander with so much pleasure in the summer months, putting up at wayside inns (where the hostess makes her 'note' on a slate and finds it hard work to make the amount come to more than five francs, for the night, for board and lodging for 'monsieur') and at farmhouses sometimes; chatting with the people in their rather troublesome patois, and making excursions with the local antiquary or curé, to some spot celebrated in history. They are pleasant days,

[1] The people in this part of Normandy are becoming less political, and more conservative, every day (a conservatism which, in their case, may be taken as a sign of prosperity, and of a certain unwillingness to be disturbed in their business); they are content with a paternal government—at a distance; they wish for peace and order, and have no objection to be taken care of. They are so willing to be led that, as a Frenchman expressed it to us, 'they would almost prefer, if they could, to have an omnipotent Postmaster-General to inspect all letters, and see whether they were creditable to the sender and fitting to be received'!

when, if we will put up with a few inconvèniences, and live principally out of doors, we may see and hear much that a railway traveller misses altogether. We shall not admire the system of farming, as a rule (each farmer holding only a few acres); and we shall find some of the cottages of the labourers very primitive, badly built, and unhealthy, although generally neat; we shall notice that the people are cruel, and careless of the sufferings of animals, and that no farm servant knows how to groom a horse. We shall see them clever in making cider, and prone to drink it; we shall see plenty of fine, strong, rather idle men and women in the fields carrying tremendous bürdens, but hardly any children; they are almost as rare in the country as a lady, or a gentleman. Indeed, in all our country wanderings the 'gentry' make little figure, and appear much less frequently on the scene than we are accustomed to in England. There are, of course, *propriétaires* in this part of Normandy

who spend both their time and money in the country, and are spoken of with respect and affection by the people; but they are *rarœ aves*, men of mark, like the founder of the protestant colony at Beuzeval on the sea.

Nearly every Sunday after harvest-time there will be a village wedding, where we may see the bride and bridegroom coming to take 'the first sacrament;' seated in a prominent place in front of the altar, and receiving the elements before the rest of the congregation, the bride placing a white favour on the basket which contains the consecrated bread, and afterwards coming from the church, the bride with a cap nearly a foot high, the bridegroom wearing a dress coat, with a tremendous bouquet, and a wedding-ring on his fore-finger; and, if we stand near the church porch, we may be deafened with a salute fired by the villagers in honour of the occasion, and overwhelmed by the eloquence of the 'best man,' who takes this opportunity of delivering a speech;

and finally, the bells will ring out with such familiar tone that we can hardly realise that we are in France.[1]

These people are of the labouring class, but they have some money to 'commence life' with; the poorest girls seldom marry without a portion (indeed, so important is this considered amongst them that there are societies for providing portions for the unendowed), and they are, with few exceptions, provident and happy in married life. They are so in the country at least, in spite of all that has been said and written to the contrary. A lady who has had five-and-twenty years' acquaintance with French society, both in town and country, assures us that 'the stereotyped literary and dramatic view of French married life is wickedly false.' The cor-

[1] In the matter of bells, the same voices now ring half over Europe—the music is the same at Bruges as at Birmingham; church bells being made wholesale, to the same pattern and in the same mould, another link in the chain of old associations, is broken.

ruption of morals, she says, which so generally prevails in Paris, and which has been so systematically aggravated by the luxury and extravagance of the second Empire, has emboldened writers to foist these false pictures of married life on the world.

But we, as travellers, must not enter deeply into these questions; our business is, as usual, principally with their picturesque aspect. And there is plenty to see; a few miles from us there is the little town of Pont l'Evêque; and of course there is a fête going on. Let us glance at the official programme for the day:—

'At 10 A.M., agricultural and horticultural meetings.

From 11 to 12, musical mass; several pieces to be performed by the band of the 19th Regiment.

At 12½, meeting of the Orphéonists and other musical societies.

1 P.M., ordering and march of a procession, and review of Sappers and Miners.

2 P.M., ascension of grotesque balloons.

2½ P.M., race of velocipedes.

3½ P.M., climbing poles and races in sacks.

5 P.M., performance of music in the *Place de l'Eglise;* band of the 19th Regiment.

6 P.M., grand dinner in the College Hall, with toasts, speeches, and concert.

8 P.M., general illumination with Chinese lanterns, &c.

9 P.M., Display of fireworks; procession with torches to the music of the military band.'

N.B. Every householder is requested to contribute to the gaiety by illuminating his own house—*By order of the Maire.*

How the rather obscure little town of Pont l'Evêque suddenly becomes important,—how it puts on (as only a French town knows how to do) an alluring and coquettish appearance; how the people promenade arm and arm, up the street and down the street, on the dry little *place*, and under the shrivelled-up trees; how they play at cards and dominoes in the middle of the road, and crowd to the canvas booths outside the town—would be a long task to tell. They crowd everywhere—to the menagerie of wild beasts, to see the 'pelican of the wilderness;' to the penny peepshows, where they fire six shots for a

sou at a plaster cast of Bismarck; to the lotteries for crockery and bonbons, and to all sorts of exhibitions 'gratis.' Of the quantity of cider and absinthe consumed in one day, the holiday-makers may have rather a confused and careless recollection, as they are jogged home, thirteen deep in a long cart, with a neglected, footsore old horse, weighed down with his clumsy harness and his creaking load, and deafened by the jingling of his rusty bells.

But if we happen to be in one of the larger towns during the time of the Imperial fêtes (the 15th of August), or at a seaport on the occasion of the annual procession in honour of the Virgin, we shall see a more striking ceremony still. The processions are very characteristic, with the long lines of fisherwomen in their scarlet and coloured dresses, and handkerchiefs tied round the head; the fishermen, old and weather-beaten, boys in semi-naval costume, neat and trim; and perhaps a hundred little children, dressed in blue and

white. A dense mass of people crowding through the hot streets all day, impressive from their numbers, and from the quiet orderly method of their procession, headed and marshalled, of course, by the clergy and manœuvred to the sound of bells. There is such a perpetual ringing of bells, and the trains run so frequently, that those who are not accustomed to such sights may become confused as to their true meaning. We learn, however, from the *affiches* that it is all in honour of 'Our Lady of Hope,' that the *externes* from one school parade the streets to-day, wearing wreaths and carrying banners and crowns of flowers; that others bear aloft the 'cipher of Mary,' the banner of the Immaculate Conception, baskets of roses, oriflammes, &c.; that twenty grown-up men parade the town with the 'banner of the Sacred Heart,' and that a party of young ladies, in white dresses fringed with gold, brave the heat and the dust, and crowd to do honour to the 'Queen of Angels.' A multitude with streamers

and banners, a confusion of colour and gilding, passing to and from the churches all day; and at night, fire balloons, *feu d'artifice*, open theatres, and 'general joy.'

Of one more ceremony we must speak, differing in character, but equally characteristic and curious. We are in the country again, spending our days in sketching, or wandering amongst the hills; enjoying the 'perfect weather,' as we call it, and a little careless, perhaps, of the fact that the land is parched with thirst, that the springs are dried up, and that the peasants are beginning to despair of rain.

We see a little white smoke curling through the branches of the trees, and hear in faint, uncertain cadence, the voices of men and children singing. Presently there comes up the pathway between two lines of poplars, a long procession, headed by a priest, holding high in the air a glittering cross; there are old men with bowed heads, young men erect, with shaven

crowns, and boys in scarlet and white robes, carrying silver censers; there is a clanking of silver chains, a tinkling of little bells, and an undertone of oft-repeated prayer. The effect is startling, and brilliant; the sunlight glances upon the white robes of the men, in alternate stripes of soft shadow and dazzling brightness, the wind plays round their feet as they march heavily along, in a whirl of dust which robs the leaves of their morning freshness; whilst the scarlet robes of the children light up the grove as with a furnace, and the rush of voices disturbs the air. On they come through the quiet country fields, hot and dusty with their long march, the foremost priest holding his head high, and doing his routine work manfully—never wearying of repeating the same words, or of opening and shutting the dark-bound volume in his hand; and the children, not yet quite weary of singing, and of swinging incense-burners —keeping close together two and two in line;

the people following being less regular, less apparently enthusiastic, but walking close together in a long winding stream up the hill.

What does it all mean? Why, that these simple people want rain on the land, and that they have collected from all parts of the country to offer their prayers, and their money, to propitiate the Deity. Could we, but for one moment, as onlookers from some other sphere, see this line of creeping things on their earnest errand, the sight would seem a strange one. Do these atoms on the earth's surface hope to change the order of the elements, to serve their own purposes? If rain were needed, would it not come?

But we are in a land where we are taught, not only to pray for our wants, but to pay for their expression; so let us not question the motive of the procession, but follow it again in the evening, into the town, where it becomes lost in the crowded streets—so crowded that we cannot see more than the heads of the people; but

the line is marked above them by a stream of sunset, which turns the dust-particles above their heads into a golden fringe. They make a halt in the square and sing the 'Angelus,' and then enter the cathedral, where the priest offers up a prayer—a prayer which we would interpret—not for rain, if drought be best, but rather for help and strength to fight the battle of life in the noblest way.

Such scenes may still be witnessed in Normandy (although, of course, becoming less primitive and characteristic every year) by those who are not compelled to hurry through the land.

In the country districts the habits of the peasant class are the only ones that a traveller has any opportunity of observing; of the upper classes he will see nothing, and of their domestic life obtain no idea whatever. It is not to be accomplished, *en passant*, in Normandy, any more than in Vienna. In the inns, the company at

the public table consists almost invariably of French commercial travellers, and the two English ladies whom we meet with everywhere, travelling together. There is hardly an hotel in Normandy, excepting, of course, at the watering-places (of which we shall speak in the last chapter), that would be considered well appointed, according to modern notions of comfort and convenience. Ladies travelling alone would certainly find themselves better accommodated in Switzerland or in the Pyrenees; excepting in the matter of expense, for Normandy is still one of the cheapest parts of Europe to travel in—the Russians and Americans not having yet come.

We meet, as we have said, but few French people above the farming and commercial class; our fellow-travellers being generally 'unprotected' Englishwomen who may be seen in summer-time at the various railway stations—fighting their way to the front in the battle of the '*bagages*,' and speaking French to the officials with a

grammatical fervour, and energy, which is wonderful to contemplate[1]—taking their places on the top of a diligence, amongst fowls and cheeses, with the heroic self sacrifice that would be required to mount a barricade; in short, placing themselves continually (and unnecessarily, it must be admitted) in positions inconsistent with English notions of propriety, and exposing themselves, for pleasure's sake, to more roughness and rudeness than is good for their sex. These things arise sometimes from necessity—on which we have not a word to say—but

[1] We are tempted to remark, in passing, on the curious want of *manner* in speaking French that we notice amongst English people abroad; arising, probably, from their method of learning it. French people have often expressed to us their astonishment at this defect, amongst so many educated English women; a defect which, according to the same authority, is less prominent amongst travelled Englishmen in the same position in life. We will not venture to give an opinion upon the latter point; but most of us have yet to learn that there are two French languages—one for writing and one for speaking; and that the latter is almost made up of *manner*, and depends upon the modulation of the voice.

more frequently from a rigid determination to 'economize,' in a way that they would not dream of doing at home.

We would certainly suggest that English ladies should not elect to travel by the diligences, and in out-of-the-way places, *unattended;* and that they had better not attempt to 'rough it' in Normandy, if they are able (by staying at home) to avoid the concussion.

To most men, this diligence travelling is charming—the seat on the *banquette* on a fine summer's day is one of the most enjoyable places in life; it is cheap, and certainly not too rapid (five or six miles an hour being the average); and we can sit almost as comfortably in a corner of the banquette as in an easy-chair. In this beautiful country we should always either drive or walk, if we have time; the diligence is the most amusing and sometimes the slowest method of progress. Nobody hurries—although we carry 'the mails' and have a letter-box in the side of the

conveyance, where letters are posted as we go along, it is scarcely like travelling—the free and easy way in which people come and go on the journey is more like 'receiving company' than taking up passengers. As we jog along, to the jingling of bells and the creaking of rusty iron, the people that we overtake on the road keep accumulating on our vehicle one by one, as we approach a town, until we become encrusted with human things like a rock covered with limpets. There is no shaking them off, the driver does not care, and they certainly do not all pay. It is a pleasant family affair which we should all be sorry to see disturbed; and the roads are so good and even, that it does not matter much about the load. The neglect and cruelty to the horses, which we are obliged to witness, is certainly one drawback,[1] and the dust and crowding on market

[1] It is worthy of note that, in a cruel country like France, the 'blinkers' to the horses (which we are doing away with in England) are a most merciful provision against the driver's brutality; and a security to the traveller, against his habitual carelessness.

days, are not always pleasant; but we can think of no other objections in fine weather, to this quiet method of seeing the country.

Much has been said in favour of 'a walking tour in Normandy,' but we venture to question its thorough enjoyment when undertaken for long distances; and it can scarcely be called 'economical to walk,' unless the pedestrian's time is of no value to other people.

Let us be practical, and state the cost of travelling over the whole of the ground that we have mapped out. We may assume that the most determined pedestrian will not commence active operations until he reaches Havre, or some other seaport town. From Havre to Pont Audemer by steamboat; thence by road or railway to *all* the towns on our route (visiting Rouen by the Seine, from Honfleur), and so back to Havre, will cost a 'knapsack-traveller' 46 francs 50 c., if he takes the banquette of the diligence and travels third class, by railway.

Thus it is a question of less than two pounds, for those who study economy, whilst at least a month's time is saved by taking the diligence.

One argument for walking is, that you may leave the high roads at pleasure, and see more of the country and of the people; but the pedestrian has his day's work before him, and must spend the greater part of an August day on the dusty road, in order to reach his destination. There are districts, such as those round Vire and Mortain, which are exceptionally hilly, where he might walk from town to town; but he will not see the country as well, even there, as from the elevated position of a banquette. The finest parts of Normandy are generally in the neighbourhood of towns which the traveller (who has driven to them) can explore on his arrival, without fatigue; *chacun à son gout*—these smooth, well-levelled roads are admirably adapted for velocipedes—but we confess to preferring the public conveyances, to any other method of travelling in France.

Let us conclude our remarks on this subject with an extract from the published diary of a pedestrian, who thus describes his journey from Lisieux to Caen, a distance of about twenty-six miles :—

'It is nightfall,' he says, 'before I have walked more than half-way to Caen; to the left of the road I see a number of lights indicative of a small town, but I perceive no road in that direction, and so am compelled to trudge on. I was dreadfully fatigued, for I had walked about Lisieux before starting. In the faint light, I thought I saw a dog cross the road just before me, but soon perceived that it must be a spectral one, the result of excessive fatigue. At length I reach a lamp-post, with the light still burning, indicating that I am in the suburbs of Caen. The road proceeds down a steep hill. I don't know how long it would seem to the visitor in the ordinary way, but to myself, prostrated by fatigue, it appeared on this night a long and weary tramp.'—'*A Walking Tour in Normandy.*'

CHAPTER XI.

ARCHITECTURE AND COSTUME.

IN the course of our little pilgrimage through Normandy, it may have been thought that we dwelt with too much earnestness and enthusiasm on the architecture of the middle ages, as applicable to buildings in the nineteenth century. Let us repeat our belief, that it is in its *adaptability* to our wants, both practical and artistic, that its true value consists. Mediæval architects in England are never tired of insisting upon this fact; although hitherto they must confess to a certain amount of failure, because, perhaps, they attempt too much.

If one were to judge by what appears to be going on in nearly every town in England at the present time, we should say that there never was a time when architecture was so much considered. 'Every town' (says a late writer, speaking of the extent of this movement), 'that shares the progress and character of the age, has a new town hall, a new exchange, new schools, and every institution for which an honest pretence can be found. A stranger, possessing an interest in the town, and with no claim upon it excepting that it shall please his eye, must be charmed with the profuse display of towers, turrets, pinnacles, and pointed roofs, windows of all sorts, niches, arcades, battlements, bosses, and everything else to be found in an architectural glossary. He may wonder why a lofty tower—sometimes several towers—should be necessary to the trying cases of assault and petty larceny, to the reading of newspapers, to the inspection of samples of wheat, or to the drilling of little boys in declensions

and conjugations; but that is not his affair, and he has nothing to do with it, except to be thankful for a good sky-line, and a well-relieved, but yet harmonious, façade.' Nevertheless, we live in certain hope of a more practical application of beauty and simplicity of form, to the wants and requirements of our own day; and we believe that it is possible to have both cheap and useful buildings, graceful in form, and harmonious in colour and design.

But notwithstanding our admiration for the buildings of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, we are bound to confess that many of them, both churches and dwellings, fail too often in essentials. Their dwellings are often deficient in light and ventilation, and are built with a lavish expenditure of materials; and their churches sometimes fail in carrying out the very object for which they were constructed, viz., the transmission of sound.

Still it is possible—as we have seen at Caen and

Bayeaux—to have noble, gothic interiors which do not 'drown the voice' of the preacher; and it is also possible—as we have seen in many towns in Normandy—to build ornamental and healthy dwellings at a moderate cost. The extraordinary adaptability of Gothic architecture over all other styles, is a subject on which the general public is very ignorant, and with which it has little sympathy. The mediæval architect is a sad and solitary man (who ever met a cheery one?), because his work is so little understood; yet if he would only meet the enemy of expediency and ugliness halfway, and condescend to teach us how to build not merely *economically*, but well at the same time, he would no longer be 'the waif and stray of an inartistic century.'

Shadows rise around us as we write—dim reproachful shadows of an age of unspeakable beauty in constructive art, and of (apparently) unapproachable excellence in design; and the

question recurs to us again—Can we ever hope to compete with thirteenth-century buildings whilst we lead nineteenth-century lives? It may not be in our generation, but the time will assuredly come when, as has been well remarked, 'the living vigour of humanity will break through the monotony of modern arrangements and assert itself in new forms—forms which may cause a new generation to feel less regret at being compelled to walk in straight lines.'

Here our thoughts, on the great question of architectural beauty and fitness, turn naturally to a New World. If, as we believe, there is a life and energy in the West which must sooner or later make its mark in the world, and perhaps take a lead for a while, amongst the nations, in the practical application of Science and Art; may it not rest with a generation of Americans yet unborn, to create—out of such elements as the fast-fading Gothic of the middle ages—a style of architecture that will equal it in beauty,

and yet be more suitable to a modern era; a style that shall spring spontaneously from the wants and requirements of the age—an age that shall prize beauty of form as much as utility of design? Do we dream dreams? Is it quite beyond the limits of possibility that an art, that has been repeating itself for ages in Europe—until the original designs are fading before our eyes, until the moulds have been used so often that they begin to lose their sharpness and significance—may not be succeeded by a new and living development which will be found worthy to take its place side by side with the creations of old classic time? Is the idea altogether Utopian—is there not room in the world for a 'new style' of architecture—shall we be always copying, imitating, restoring—harping for ever on old strings?

It may be that we point to the wrong quarter of the globe, and we shall certainly be told that no good thing in art can come from the

'great dollar cities of the West,' from a people without monuments and without a history; but there are signs of intellectual energy, and a process of refinement and cultivation is going on, which it will be well for us of the Old World not to ignore. Their day may be not yet; before such a change can come, the nation must find rest—the pulse of this great, restless, thriving people must beat less quickly, they must know (as the Greeks knew it) the meaning of the word 'repose.'

It was a good sign, we thought, when Felix Darley, an American artist on a tour through Europe (a '5000 dollar run' is, we believe, the correct expression), on arriving at Liverpool, was content to go quietly down the Wye, and visit our old abbeys and castles, such as Tintern and Kenilworth, instead of taking the express train for London; and it is to the many signs of culture and taste for art, which we meet with daily, in intercourse with travellers from the western

continent, that we look with confidence to a great revolution in taste and manners.[1]

To these, then (whom we may be allowed to look upon as pioneers of a new and more artistic civilization), and to our many readers on the other side of the Atlantic, we would draw attention to the towns in Normandy, as worthy of examination, before they pass away from our eyes; towns where 'art is still religion,'—towns that were built before the age of utilitarianism, and when expediency was a thing unknown. To young America we say—'Come and see the buildings of old France; there is nothing like them in the western world, neither the wealth of San Francisco, nor the culture of its younger generation, can, at present, produce anything like them. They are waiting for you in the sunlight

[1] We confess to a lively sympathy with the growth of artistic taste in America; a sympathy not diminished by the knowledge that every English work of credit on these subjects is eagerly bought and read by the people.

of this summer evening; the gables are leaning, the waters are sparkling, the shadows are deepening on the hills, and the colours on the banners that trail in the water, are 'red, white, and blue!'

A word or two here may not be out of place, on some of the modern architectural features of Normandy. In some towns that we have passed through it would seem as if the old feeling for form and colour had at last revived, and that (although perhaps in rather a commonplace way) the builders of modern villas and seaside houses were emulating the works of their ancestors.

From our windows at Houlgate (on the sea-coast, near Trouville) we can see modern, half-timbered houses, set in a garden of shrubs and flowers, with gables prettily 'fringed,' graceful dormer windows, turrets and overhanging eaves; solid oak doors, and windows with carved balconies twined about with creepers, with lawns

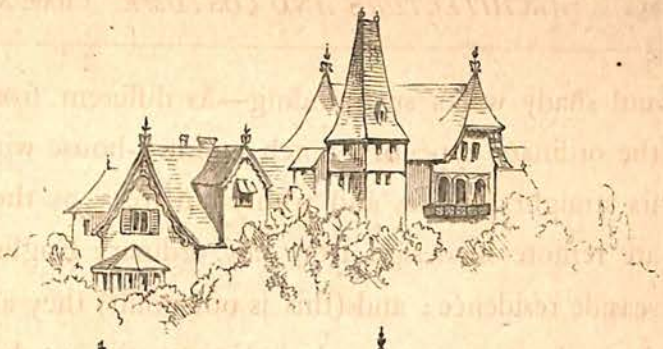
and shady walks surrounding—as different from the ordinary type of French country-house with its straight avenues and trimly cut trees, as they are remote in design from any ordinary English seaside residence; and (this is our point) they are not only ornamental and pleasing to the eye, but they are durable, dry, and healthy dwellings, and are *not costly to build.*

Here are sketches of four common examples of modern work, all of which are within a few yards of our own doors.

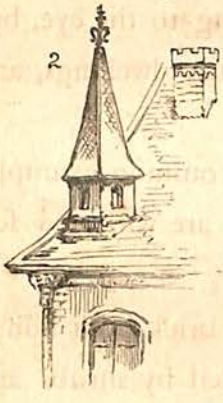
No. 1 is a good substantial brick-built house, close to the seashore, surrounded by shrubs and a small garden. The whole building is of a rich warm brown, set off by the darker tints of the woodwork; relieved by the bright shutters, the interior fittings, the flowers in the windows and the surrounding trees.

No. 2 is a common example of square open turret of dark oak, with slated roof; the chimney is of brick and terra-cotta; the frontage of the

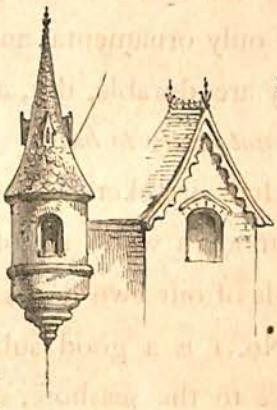
1



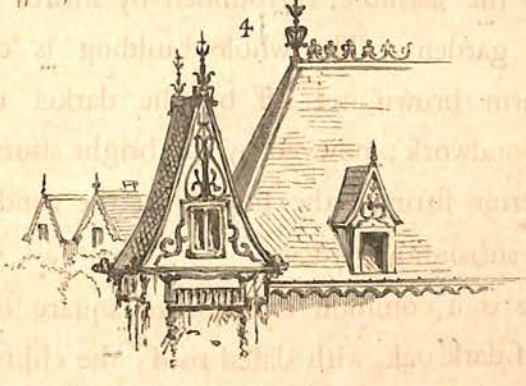
2



3



4



Houlgate
HB. 1869-

house is of parti-coloured brickwork with stone facings, &c.

No. 3 is a round tower at a street corner (the turret forming a charming boudoir, with extensive view); it is built of red and white brick, the slates on the roof are rounded, and the ornamental woodwork is of dark oak—the lower story of this house is of stone.

No. 4, which forms one end of a large house, is ornamented with light-coloured wooden galleries and carving under the eaves, contrasting charmingly with the blue slating of the roofs and the surface tiling of the frontage—smooth tiles are introduced exteriorly in diaper patterns, chiefly of the majolica colours, which the wind and rain keep ever bright and fresh-looking, and which no climate seems to affect. The ornamental woodwork on this house is especially noticeable.[1]

[1] The carving may be machine-made, and the slate and fringes

There may be nothing architecturally new in these modern 'chateaux' and 'chalets;' but it is as well to see what the French are doing, with a climate, in Normandy, much like our own, and with the same interest as ourselves, in building commodious and durable houses. It is pleasant to see that even French people care no longer to dim their eyesight with bare white walls; that they have had enough of straight lines and shadeless windows; that, in short, they are beginning to appreciate the beauty of thirteenth-century work.

We have hitherto spoken principally of the architecture of Normandy, but we might well go further in our study of old ways, and suggest that there were other matters in which we might take a hint from the middle ages. First, with respect to DRESS, let us imagine by way of illustration, that two gentlemen, clad in the easy

to the roofs cut by steam; but we must remember that these houses are only 'run up to let,' as it is called, some of them costing not more than 500*l.* or 600*l.*

and picturesque walking costume of the times of the Huguenots 'fall to a wrestling;' they may be in fun or in earnest—it matters not—they simply divest themselves of their swords, and see, as in our illustration, with what perfect ease and liberty of limb they are able to go to work and bring every muscle of the body into play. Next, by way of contrast, let us picture to ourselves what would happen to a man under the same circumstances, in the costume of the present day. If he commenced a wrestling match with no more preparation than above (*i. e.* by laying down his stick, or umbrella), it would befall him first to lose his hat, next to split his coat up the back, and to break his braces; he would lose considerably in power and balance from the restraining and unnatural shape of all

his clothes, he would have no firmness of foothold—his toes being useless to him in fashionable boots.

Does the comparison seem far-fetched; and is it not well to make the contrast, if it may lead, however slightly, to a consideration of our own deformities? We believe that the time is coming when a great modification in the dress of our younger men will be adopted, if only for health and economy; it will come with the revival, or more general practice, of such games as singlestick, wrestling, and the like, and with an improved system of physical education. It sounds little better than a mockery to speak of deeds of valour and personal prowess, whilst we submit to confine our limbs in garments that cramp the frame and resist every healthy movement of the body. We must not go farther into the question in these pages, but we may ask—were there as many narrow-shouldered, weak-chested, delicate men, in the

days when every gentleman knew how to use a sword?[1]

The extravagances and vagaries of modern costume (for which we can find no precedent in the comparative ignorance and barbarism of the middle ages) lead to the conviction that there must be a great change, if only as a question of health. Travellers who have been in Spain, notice with surprise that the men are wrapt literally 'up to their eyes,' in their cloaks, whilst the women walk abroad in the bitter wind with only a lace veil over their heads and shoulders; but the disproportionate amount of clothing that modern society compels men and

[1] It is interesting to note how the changes in the modern systems of warfare seem to be tending (both in attack and defence) to a more practical and picturesque state of things. Thus in attack, the top boots and loose costume of the engineers and sappers figure more conspicuously in these days, than the smooth broad-cloth of the troops of the line; and in defence (thanks to Captain Moncreiff's system), we are promised guns that shall be concealed in the long grass of our southern downs, whilst stone and brick fortifications need no longer desolate the heights.

women to wear in the same room seems equally absurd.[1]

And yet there must be some extraordinary fascination in the prevailing dress, that induces nearly every European nation to give up its proper costume and to be (as the saying is) 'like other people.' There is an old adage that you cannot touch pitch without being defiled, and with the people of whom we have been speaking, it certainly has its application. What is the Normandy peasant's pride on high days and holidays in the year 1869, but to put on a 'frock coat' and a *chapeau noir;* to throw away the costume that his fathers wore, to bid farewell to colour, character, and freedom of limb, to don the livery of a high civilization, and to become (to our poor understanding) anything but the 'noblest work of God.'

[1] In one of the west-end clubs a fresco has lately been exhibited as a suggestion to the members, shewing the easy and graceful costume of the fifteenth century.

Again, in the little matter of WRITING, may we not learn something by looking back three or four hundred years—were not our ancestors a little more practical than ourselves? Did the monks of the middle ages find it necessary, in order to express a single word on paper or parchment, to make the pen (as we do) travel over a distance of eight or ten inches?[1] Here are two words,

excellentis

one written by a lady, educated in the 'pot-hook-and-hanger' school, and another, the autograph of William of Malmesbury, an historian of the twelfth century. Is the modern method of writing much more legible than the old—is it more easily or quickly written; and might not

[1] If the words in an ordinary letter in a lady's handwriting, were measured, it would be found that the point of the pen had passed over a distance of twenty or thirty feet.

we adopt some method of writing, by which to express our meaning in a letter, at less length than thirty feet?

We might add something about our misuse of words (as compared with the habit of 'calling a spade a spade' in the writings of the old chroniclers), about our unnecessary complications, and the number of words required to express an idea in these days; and suggest another curious consideration, as to how such prolixity affects our thoughts and actions.[1] Is it of no moment to be able to express our thoughts quickly and easily? Does it help the Bavarian peasant-boy to comprehend the fact of the sun's rising over his native hills, that ten consonants, in the poetic word morgenländisch have to travel through his mind?

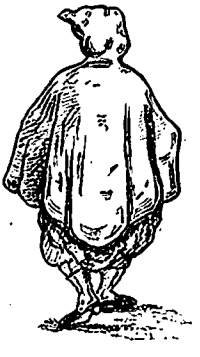
These things may be considered by many of

[1] We are becoming so accustomed to the deliberate misuse of words, that when a person (in London) informs us that he is going 'to dine at the pallis,' we understand him at once to mean that he is going to spend the day at the great glass bazaar at Sydenham.

slight importance, and that if they are wrong, they are not very easily remedied; but in architecture and costume we have the remedy in our own hands. Why—it may be asked in conclusion—do we cling to costume, and prize so much the old custom of distinctive dress? Because it bears upon its forehead the mark of truth; because, humble or noble, it is at least, what it appears to be; because it gives a silent but clear assurance (in these days so sadly needed) that a man's position in life is what he makes it appear to be; that, in short, there is nothing behind the scenes, nothing to be discovered or hunted out. It is the relic of a really 'good old time,' when a uniform or a badge of office was a mark of honour, when the *bourgeoisie* were proud of their simple estate, and domestic service was indeed what its name implies. We cling to costume and regret its disappearance, when (to use a familiar illustration) we compare the French *bonne* in a white cap, with her English contem-

porary with a chignon and the airs of 'my lady.'

But distinctive costumes, like the old buildings, are disappearing everywhere, and with them even the traditions seem to be dying out. Queen Matilda (we are soon to be told) *never worked the Bayeux Tapestry*, and Joan of Arc *was not burnt at Rouen!* The old world banners are being torn down one by one—facts which were landmarks in history are proved to be fiction by the Master of the Rolls; we close the page almost in despair, and with the words coming to our lips, 'there is *nothing true* under the sun.'



CHAPTER XII.

THE WATERING PLACES OF NORMANDY.

'Trouville est une double extrait de Paris—la vie est une fête, et le costume une mascarade.'—*Conty*.

THE watering-places of Normandy are so well known to English people that there is little that is new to be said respecting them; at the same time any description of this country would not be considered complete without some mention of the sea-coast.

The principal bathing places on the north coast are the following, commencing from the east:—DIEPPE, FÉCAMP, ÉTRETAT, TROUVILLE and DEAUVILLE, VILLERS-SUR-MER, HOULGATE, CABOURG, and CHERBOURG. We will say a few words about Trouville and Étretat (as representative places) and conclude with some statistics, in an APPENDIX, which may be useful to travellers.

Life at Trouville is the gayest of the gay: it is not so much to bathe that we come here, as because on this fine sandy shore near the mouth of the Seine, the world of fashion and delight has made its summer home; because here we can combine the refinements, pleasures, and 'distractions' of Paris with northern breezes, and indulge without restraint in those rampant follies that only a Frenchman, or a Frenchwoman, understands. It is a pretty, graceful, and rational idea, no doubt, to combine the ball room with the sanatorium, and the opera with any amount of ozone; and we may well be thankful to Dumas for in-

venting a seaside resort at once so pleasant and so gay.

Of the daily life at Trouville and Deauville there is literally nothing new to be told; they are the best, the most fashionable, and the most extravagant of French watering-places; and there is the usual round of bathing in the early morning, breakfast at half-past ten, donkey-riding, velocipede racing, and driving in the country until the afternoon, promenade concerts and in-door games at four, dinner at six or seven (table-d'hôte, if you please, where new comers are stared at with that solid, stony stare, of which only the politest nation in the world, is capable)—casino afterwards, with pleasant, mixed society, concert again and '*la danse*.'

Of the fashion and extravagance at Trouville a moralist might feel inclined to say much, but we are here for a summer holiday, and we *must* be gay both in manner and attire. It is our business to be delighted with the varied scene of

summer costume, and with all the bizarre combinations of colour that the beautiful Parisians try upon us; but it is impossible altogether to ignore the aspect of anxiety which the majority of people bring with them from Paris. They come 'possessed,' (the demon is in those huge boxes, which have caused the death of so many poor *facteurs*, and which the railway pours out upon us, daily); they bring their burden of extravagance with them, they take it down to the beach, they plunge into the water with it, and come up burdened as before.

Dress is the one thing needful at Trouville—in the water, or on the sands. Look at that old French gentleman, with the cross of the Legion of Honour on his breast; he is neat and clean, his dress is, in all respects, perfection; and it is difficult to say whether it is the make of his boots, the fit of his gloves, or his hat, which is most on his mind—they furnish him with food for much thought, and sometimes

trouble him not a little. Of the ladies' attire what shall we say? It is all described in the last number of '*Le Follet*,' and we will not attempt to compete with that authority; we will rather quote two lines from the letter of a young English lady, who thus writes home to quiet friends,—'We are all delighted with Trouville; we have to make *five toilettes daily*, the gentlemen are so particular.'

Of the bathing at Trouville, a book might be written on the costumes alone—on the suits of motley, the harlequins, the mephistopheles, the spiders, the 'grasshoppers green,' and the other eccentric *costumes de bain*—culminating in a lady's dress trimmed with death's heads, and a gentleman's, of an indescribable colour, after the pattern of a trail of seaweed. Strange, costly creatures—popping in and out of little wooden houses, seated, solitary on artificial rocks, or pacing up and down within the limits prescribed by the keeper of the show—tell us,

'Monsieur l'administrateur,' something about their habits; stick some labels into the sand with their Latin names, tell us how they manage to feather their nests, whether they 'ruminate' over their food—and we shall have added to our store of knowledge at the seaside!

It is all admirably managed ('administered' is the word), as everything of the kind is in France. In order to bathe, as the French understand it, you must study costume, and to make a good appearance in the water you must move about with the dexterity and grace required in a ball room; you must remember that you are present at a *bal de mer*, and that you are not in a tub. There are water velocipedes, canoes for ladies, and floats for the unskilful; fresh water for the head before bathing, and tubs of hot water afterwards for the feet, on the sands; an appreciating and admiring audience on the shore; a lounge across the sands and through the 'Etablissement,' in costumes more scanty than those of Neapolitan fish girls!

Yes, youth and beauty come to Trouville-by-the-sea; French beauty of the dresden china pattern, side by side and hand in hand, with the young English girl of the heavy Clapham type (which elderly Frenchmen adore)—all in the water together, in the prettiest dresses, 'sweetly trimmed' and daintily conceived; all joining hands, men and women having a 'merry go round' in the water—some swimming, some diving, shouting, and disporting themselves, and 'playing fantastic tricks before high heaven,'—to the admiration of a crowded beach.

'*Honi soit qui mal y pense*,' when English ladies join the party, and write home that 'it is delightful, that there is a refreshing disregard for what people may think at French watering-places, and a charming absence of self-consciousness that disarms criticism'! What does quiet paterfamilias think about his mermaid daughter, and of that touch about the 'absence of self-consciousness;' and would anything induce *him*

to clothe himself in a light-green skin, to put on a pair of 'human fins,' or to perch himself on the rocks before a crowd of ladies on the beach, within a few yards of him? Yes, it *is* delightful—the prettiest sight and the brightest life imaginable; but is it quite the thing, we may ask, for English girls to take their tone (ever so little) from the Casino, and from the '*Guides Conty*;' which they do as surely, as the caterpillar takes its colour from the leaf on which it feeds?

But the system of bathing in France is so sensible and good compared with our own; the facilities for learning to swim, the accommodation for bathers, and the accessories, are so superior to anything we know of in England, that we hardly like to hint at any drawbacks. We need not all go to Trouville (some of us cannot afford it), but we may live at most of these bathing places at less cost, and with more comfort and amusement than at home. They do manage some

things better in France: at the sea-side here the men dress in suits of flannel, and wear light canvas shoes habitually; the women swim, and take their children with them into the water, —floating them with gourds, which accustoms them to the water, and to the use of their limbs. At the hotels and restaurants, they provide cheap and appetizing little dinners; there is plenty of ice in hot weather, and cooling drinks are to be had everywhere: in short, in these matters the practical common sense of the French people strikes us anew, every time we set foot on their shores. Why it should be so, we cannot answer; but as long as it is so, our countrymen and countrywomen may well crowd to French watering-places.

The situation of Trouville is thus described by Blanchard Jerrold, who knows the district better than most Englishmen:—'Even the shore has been subdued to comfortable human uses; rocks have been picked out of the sand, until a carpet

as smooth as Paris asphalte has been obtained for the fastidious feet of noble dames, who are the finishing bits of life and colour in the exquisite scene. Even the ribbed sand is not smooth enough; a boarded way has been fixed from the casino to the mussel banks, whither the dandy resorts to play at mussel gathering, in a nautical dress that costs a sailor's income. The great and rich have planted their Louis XIII. chateaux, their 'maisons mauresques' and 'pavillons à la renaissance,' so closely over the available slopes, round about the immense and gaudily-appointed Casino, and the Hotel of the Black Rocks, that it has been found necessary to protect them with masonry of more than Roman strength. From these works of startling force, and boldness of design, the view is a glorious one indeed. To the right stretches the white line of Havre, pointed with its electric *phare;* to the left, the shore swells and dimples, and the hills, in gentle curves, rise beyond. Deauville is below, and beyond—a

flat, formal place of fashion, where ladies exhibit the genius of Worth to one another, and to the astonished fishermen.

Imagine a splendid court playing at sea-side life; imagine such a place as Watteau would have designed, with inhabitants as elegantly rustic as his, and you imagine a Trouville. It is the village of the millionnaire—the stage whereon the duchess plays the hoyden, and the princess seeks the exquisite relief of being natural for an hour or two. No wonder every inch of the rock is disputed; there are so many now in the world who have sipped all the pleasures the city has to give. Masters of the art of entering a drawing-room, the Parisians crowd seaward to get the sure foot of the mussel-gatherer upon the slimy granite of a bluff Norman headland; they bring their taste with them, and they get heartiness in the bracing air. The *salon* of the casino, at the height of the season, is said to show at once the most animated and diverting

assemblage of Somebodies to be seen in the world.'

DEAUVILLE, separated only by the river Touques, is a place of greater pretension even than Trouville. It is, however, quite in its infancy; it was planned for a handsome and extensive watering-place, but the death of the Duc de Morny has stopped its growth,—large tracts of land, in what should be the town, still lying waste. It is quiet compared with Trouville, select and 'aristocratic,' and boasts the handsomest casino in France; it is built for the most part upon a sandy plain, but the houses are so tastefully designed, and so much has been made of the site, that (from some points of view) it presents, with its background of hills, a singularly picturesque appearance.

No matter how small or uninteresting the locality, if it is to be fashionable, *il n'y aura point de difficulté.* If there are no natural attractions, the ingenious and enterprising specu-

lator will provide them; if there are no trees, he will bring them,— no rocks, he will manufacture them,—no river, he will cut a winding canal, —no town, he will build one,—no casino, he will erect a wooden shed on the sands!

But of all the bathing-places on the north coast of Normandy the little fishing-village of ÉTRETAT will commend itself most to English people, for its bold coast and bracing air. Situated about seventeen miles north-east of Havre, shut in on either side by rocks which form a natural arch over the sea, the little bay of Étretat—with its brilliant summer crowd of idlers and its little group of fishermen who stand by it in all weathers—is one of the quaintest of the nooks and corners of France.

There is a homelike snugness and retirement about the position of Étretat, and a mystery about the caves and caverns — extending for long distances under its cliffs—which form an attraction that we shall find nowhere else. Since

Paris has found it out, and taken it by storm as it were, the little fishermen's village has been turned into a gay *parterre*; its shingly beach lined with chairs *à volonté*, and its shores smoothed and levelled for delicate feet. The *Casino* and the *Établissement* are all that can be desired; whilst pretty châlets and villas are scattered upon the hills that surround the town. There is scarcely any 'town' to speak of; a small straggling village, with the remains of a Norman church, once close to the sea (built on the spot where the people once watched the great flotilla of William the Conqueror drift eastward to St. Valery), and on the shore, old worn-out boats, thatched and turned into fishermen's huts and bathing retreats.

Étretat has its peculiar customs; the old fisher-women, who assume the more profitable occupation of washerwomen during the summer, go down to the shore as the tide is ebbing, and catch the spring water on its way to the sea;

scooping out the stones, and making natural washing-tubs of fresh water close to the sea—a work of ten minutes or so, which is all washed away by the next tide. At Étretat almost everybody swims and wears a costume of blue serge, trimmed with scarlet, or other bright colour; and everybody sits in the afternoon in the gay little bay, purchases shell ornaments and useless souvenirs, sips coffee or ices, and listens to the band. For a very little place, without a railway, and with only two good hotels, Étretat is wonderfully lively and attractive; and the drives in the neighbourhood add to its natural attractions.

The show is nearly over for the season, at Étretat, by the time we leave it; the puppets are being packed up for Paris, and even the boxes that contained them will soon be carted away to more sheltered places. It is late in September, and the last few bathers are making the most of their time, and wandering about on the sands in

their most brilliant attire; but their time is nearly over, Étretat will soon be given up to the fishermen again—like the bears in the high Pyrenees, that wait at the street corners of the mountain towns, and scramble for the best places after the visitors have left, the natives of Étretat are already preparing to return to their winter quarters.

It is the finest weather of the year, and the setting sun is brilliant upon the shore; a fishing-boat glides into the bay, and a little fisher-boy steps out upon the sands. He comes down towards us, facing the western sun, with such a glory of light about his head, such a halo of fresh youth, and health, as we have not seen once this summer, in the 'great world.' His feet are bare, and leave their tiny impress on the sand—a thousand times more expressive than any Parisian boot; his little bronzed hands are crystallized with the salt air; his dark-brown curls are flecked with sea-foam, and flutter in the evening breeze;

his face is radiant—a reflection of the sun, a mystery of life and beauty half revealed.

After all we have seen and heard around us, it is like turning, with a thankful sense of rest, from the contemplation of some tricky effect of colour, to a painting by Titian or Velasquez; it is, in an artistic sense, a transition from darkness to light—from the glare of the lamp to the glory of the true day.

APPENDIX TO NORMANDY PICTURESQUE.

List of Watering-places, on the coast of Normandy, from east to west, with a few notes for travellers.

Dieppe (Pop. 20,000).—Busy seaport town—fashionable and expensive during the season—good accommodation facing the sea—pretty rides and drives in the neighbourhood—shingly beach, bracing air.

HOTELS: *Royal, des Bains, Bristol, &c.* *Ry. to Paris.*

Fécamp (13,000).—A dull uninteresting town, inns second-rate and dear, in summer—situated on a river, the town reaching for nearly a mile inland.

HOTELS: *de la Plage, des Bains, Chariot d'Or.* *Ry. to Paris.*

Étretat (2000).—Romantic situation—bracing air—rocky coast—shingly beach—only two good hotels—a few villas and apartments—no town—very amusing for a time.

HOTELS: *Blanquet, Hauville.* *Dil. to Fécamp, and Havre.*

Trouville (5000 or 6000).—Fashionable and very dear at the best hotels—ample accommodation to suit all purses—good sands—splendid casino—handsome villas, and plenty of apartments. Less bracing than Dieppe or Étretat.

HOTELS: *Roches-Noires, Paris, Bras d'Or, &c.* *Ry. to Paris.*

Deauville.—A scattered assemblage of villas and picturesque houses—very exclusive and select, and dull for a stranger—grand casino—quite a modern town, built on a plain—separated from Trouville by the river Touques.

HOTELS: *Grand, du Casino, &c.* *Ry. to Paris.*

Villers-sur-mer.—A pretty village, six miles from Trouville—crowded during the bathing season—beautiful neighbourhood—good apartments, but expensive—inns moderate.

HOTELS: *du Bras d'Or, Casino, &c.* *Ry. to Paris.*

Houlgate.—One large hotel surrounded by pretty and well-built châlets to be let furnished; also many private villas in gardens—beautiful situation—good sands—small Casino—general accommodation limited—becoming fashionable and dear. *Dil. to Trouville, 11 miles.*

Beuzeval.—A continuation of Houlgate, westward; lower, near the mouth of the Dives—one second-rate hotel close to the sands—quiet and reasonable—sea recedes half-a-mile (no boating at Houlgate or Beuzeval)—beautiful neighbourhood—a few villas and apartments—no Établissement. *Dil. to Trouville or Caen.*

Cabourg.—A small, but increasing, town in a fine open situation on the left bank of the Dives—good accommodation and moderate—not as well known as it deserves to be.

HOTELS: *de la Plage, Casino, &c.* *Dil. do. do.*

[There are nine other sea-bathing places on the coast, north of Caen and Bayeux, situated in the following order:—**Lion, Luc, Langrune, St. Aubin, Courseulles, Aromanches, Asnelles, Vierville,** and **Grandcamp**; where accommodation is more or less limited, and board and lodging need not cost more than six or seven francs a-day in the season. They are generally spoken of in French guidebooks as, '*bien tristes, sans ressources*;' 'fit only for fathers of families'! St. Aubin, about twelve miles from Caen is one of the best.]

Cherbourg (42,000).—Large, fortified town—bold coast—good bathing—splendid views from the heights—wide streets and squares—docks and harbours—hotels—good, and dear.

HOTELS: *l'Univers, l'Amirauté, &c.* *Ry. to Paris.*

Granville (8000).—See pp. 122 and following.

HOTELS: *du Nord, Soleil, &c.* *Dil. and Ry. to Paris;—Steamboats to Jersey, &c.*

*** The average charge at seaside hotels in Normandy, during the season (which lasts about two months), is 8 or 9 francs a-day, for sleeping accommodation and the two public meals; nearly everything else being charged for 'extra.' At Trouville, Deauville, and Dieppe, 10 or 12 francs is considered 'moderate.' Furnished houses and apartments can be had nearly everywhere, and at all prices. The sum of 10*l.* or 15*l.* a week is sometimes paid at Trouville, or Deauville, for a furnished house. Conty's guide-book, '*Les Côtes de Normandie*,' should be recommended for its very practical information on these matters, but not for its illustrations.

Trouville, August, 1869.

Books by the same Author.

'ARTISTS AND ARABS.'

'TRAVELLING IN SPAIN.'

'THE PYRENEES.'

Published by Sampson Low and Co.,
Crown Buildings, Fleet Street, London.

00056873

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 July, 2018